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ABSTRACT

In 12 brief chapters, a view is provided of elementary school improvement efforts made by participants in the Contact School Plan of the Council of Europe's Council for Cultural Co-operation. The Contact School Plan created a network of 12 schools implementing innovative educational practices in as many nations. Chapters 1 and 2 describe the Contact School Plan and similarities and differences of participating schools. Chapter 3 outlines the process of developing the report. Chapter 4 describes five zones of school improvement and 14 related characteristics considered central to school innovation: (1) educational goals and principles, including active individualization, autonomy, cooperation, and teacher-pupil relationships; (2) organization of education, including monitoring student progress and development, arrangement of time and didactic working methods, and mixed-age groups; (3) content of education, including provision of a range of subjects, and activities that stimulate individual development; (4) organization of teacher cooperation, including organizational structure, support, friendship, and leadership; and (5) organization of external contacts, including parent school relationship and teacher aides. Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 describe characteristics of contact schools for each zone. Chapter 10 provides a survey of the presence of these characteristics in each of the 12 schools. Chapter 11 discusses results of research on the manner in which school improvement was achieved. Chapter 12 offers conclusions. Appendices provide related survey materials and brief profiles of the contact schools. (RH)

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Project No. 8:
"Innovation in primary education"

School improvement from within

# The contact school plan

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COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL CO-OPERATION (CDCC)

Project N° 8
"Innovation in Primary Education"

# SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT FROM WITHIN

## THE CONTACT SCHOOL PLAN

by

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Introduction

> "What do you like doing best in the world, Pooh?"
> "Well", said Pooh, "what I like best --- " and then he had to stop and think. Because although Eating Honey was a very good thing to do, there was a moment just before you began to eat it which was better than when you were, but he didn't know what it was called.
>
> (A.A. Milne: The House at Pooh Corner)

Even though Pooh is an expert at eating honey, and although eating honey is one of his daily chores, still, to clearly pinpoint the essential aspects of it is very difficult indeed.

Although school improvement is our daily occupation, to exactly formulate its essential aspects proved a difficult task for the participants of the Contact School Plan. Representatives of twelve improvement projects, regarded by their governments as successful, gathered together and exchanged information in order to find out whether from the collected experiences, obtained in various national circumstances, any general conclusions could be drawn and considered for special attention. Differences in the systems of education, in national policies of innovation, differences in language, all added to the difficulty of discussing things together and made learning from each other more exacting. However, the obvious differences prevented us from contenting ourselves with some superficial similarities which were hardly there. Anyway, although these international differences may have hampered us initially, in the long run they led us, through our mutual contacts, to penetrate to a number of propositions which were essential to many of the contact schools. That it was at all possible to find some conformity is due to one particular common factor: all twelve projects are concerned with school improvement which is supported by, dependent on, and carried out by the teachers themselves.

Apart from the question as to where the original initiative for the project was taken, or how much external influence came to bear upon the progress of change in the school, the teachers, whether as a team or as an influential group, regard themselves as those who do it, who carry out the changes, who make the necessary decisions, and who, where they find it appropriate, appeal for external assistance.

It is this type of innovation about which this booklet provides information: school improvement from within.

Dook Kopmels

1. The Contact School Plan

The Contact School Plan is a network of twelve contact schools, providing liaison between primary schools engaged in innovation. It is a part of Project no. 8 "Innovation in primary education" of the Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC) of the Council of Europe (1982-87).

The Contact School Plan was added to Project no. 8 in order to allow the people who are active members of the work force for innovation in primary schools in Europe, to have a direct and concrete input in the project. Project no. 8 was never meant just to produce beautiful words about innovation: it would pass on, systematise and generalise successful experiences and setbacks in the reality of the innovation within the various member states of the Council of Europe.

Accordingly the general aims of the Contact School Plan were formulated (Project Group, Malta, March 1984):

- to bring together schools involved in comparable types of innovation;
- to enable the Project to take into account the results of experiences;
- to "feed into" the Project the reactions of teachers, educators and parents, and the ideas and proposals resulting from the more conceptual work of the Project.

The Contact School Plan consists of 12 projects that are shown on the map.

| | |
|---|---|
| Volksschule 15, Vienna | A |
| Kornesios Primary School, Nicosia | CY |
| Bankagerskolan, Korsens | DK |
| A. Schweitzer Grundschule I Freiburg | D |
| Linnala School, Imatra | SF |
| 128th Primary School, Athens | GR |
| C. Laurenti, Civitavecchia | I |
| H.K. van Duyvenvoorde, Oost-Souburg | NL |
| Vardasen Primary School, Kristiansand | N |
| Fajanskolan, Falkenberg | S |
| Guthirt Primary School, Zug | CH |
| St. Aidan's Primary School, London | GB |

The Working Group on the Contact School Plan, consisting of representatives of the schools and a management group, held four meetings: Strasbourg (June 1984), Falkenberg (April 1985), Cyprus (October 1986) and Strasbourg (March 1987). During the first two meetings discussion concerning the state of affairs in the schools and the organisation of the project only took up a small part of the meeting's time.

The greater part of the time was spent in exchanging experiences and coming to conclusions about two themes:

- the implication of innovation for schools and teachers
- basic conditions for the implementation of certain innovations.

The results of these discussions form one of the building blocks of this report.

At the last two meetings the first and second drafts of this report on the Contact School Plan were the main subjects for discussion. In particular, the analysis of similarities in school improvement in the contact schools was discussed.

During the meetings of the Contact School Plan, resolutions were often formulated and agreements were often made about activities that could take place outside the meetings:

- participation of the representatives of the schools in other activities of the project (symposia, workshops etc);
- the compiling of progress reports by every contact school;
- the compiling of a monograph on the innovation project at each contact school by the school and, if possible, a video cassette or a slide presentation;
- visits between schools;
- the compiling of a short evaluation report about each school by a member of the managing group who has visited the school;
- the production of various publications (in writing, video or slide-tape sequence) about a specific part of the innovation at a contact school that would appear useful for other schools.

## 2. Differences and similarities in the contact schools

The innovation at the 12 contact schools is very diverse. Of course this is influenced by the different legal contexts and traditions in which each school in its own country and environment works:

- one school strongly focuses its attention on one contextual aspect of education (eg the attitude towards the French "neighbours" at the German school), while the other focuses its attention on the organisation of all subject areas (eg the Swedish contact school);
- one school strongly directs its attention to the development of a good didactic approach to subject-matter (eg the Italian contact school), and the other to group formation and pedagogic approach (eg the Dutch contact school);

- one school is especially mindful of one particular group of children (eg children with learning difficulties at the Greek contact school), while the other is characterised by a trans-disciplinary approach of the teaching, intended for all children, and by their association in the school's administration (eg the Cypriot contact school).

We could go on in this way with the enumeration of differences, but the kinds of differences that we have mentioned above come only from the simple datum that a school, working at school improvement, concentrates during a particular period on one aspect, or a few aspects, out of all the activities going on in the school. And the contact schools run, consequently, projects that take into account the following statement: A SCHOOL WORKING TO CHANGE EVERYTHING AT THE SAME TIME IS WORKING AT NOTHING. Not the differences that were found, but the strong similarities of what happens in schools from various countries proved to be the big surprise of the Contact School Plan.

When analysing the function of schools (and school improvement) in various countries, one could work at three levels:

- at macro-level, that is the organisation of the school system, different types of education and types of school plus the organisation of the (official) bodies giving service;
- at meso-level, that is the internal organisation of a school and the content policy carried out at that school;
- at micro-level, that is the organisation of concrete educational learning processes, contact between teacher and child, and the contacts among the children within a particular group or class.

On account of the different school systems in the various countries, and the innovation-policy implemented there, the differences between the contact schools are very great, when looked at from the macro-level.

There are big differences at the micro-level too, caused by the differences at the macro-level (teacher-child ratio, situation of buildings, legal regulations of education etc).

However, if the contact schools are considered from the meso-level then it becomes evident that there are a number of distinctly visible similarities.

An analysis of the progress reports of the contact schools makes clear that, apart from how different the role of the national or local administration may be, in all contact schools it is clear where the "heart" of school improvement beats, what keeps it alive and going: the complete teaching staff, or a part of the teaching staff with much influence. The headteacher or principal is always important in this group, and sometimes outside experts have a strong supporting and advisory role.

## 3. Plan of a search

At the beginning of 1986 I was given the task of composing a final report on the Contact School Plan by the Project Group (ie the central steering committee of Project no. 8).

Having established that the main similarity among the 12 contact schools was the mention of school improvement from within, I accepted the commission, but not with the idea of providing a description of twelve projects. On the contrary, I intended to look for other common features among these schools, engaged in a comparable kind of school improvement. Thereby I also try to find answers to the following questions:

1. Would it be possible to identify specific zones of attention in "school improvement from within" to which every school should apply itself in order to develop evenly? And would these zones be perceptible in the work of the contact schools?

2. Are there sufficiently common subjects, themes or trends to be found, common features in the contact schools, which could be reckoned as (common) goals to strive for in school improvement?

3. How do the contact schools tackle the problems which they are faced with in school improvement? Do they try and solve these problems themselves, with the present teaching staff only? Or does one make use of other means as well?

I started my quest to find an answer to these questions at a moment when each of the 12 contact schools had produced two progress reports.

Besides, there was a brief description of the improvement efforts of the contact schools, compiled by the Secretariat of the Council of Europe. When I started this work (May 1986) two meetings of representatives of the contact schools had already taken place in which I myself had also taken part.

Participating in these conferences (which were well conducted and always related to the reality of the schools), conversing with participants, watching the video recording of the Cypriot contact school, visiting the Swedish and Italian contact schools, and my own involvement in the Dutch contact school, it all made that I could profit from the already established understanding of what was happening in the contact schools.

By the qualitative analysis of the progress reports of the contact schools I could depart from a categorisation which in my own work in the Netherlands appeared to work fruitfully as a frame of thinking for teachers: the five zones in the school to which one pays attention in school improvement. These five zones are further described in chapter four of this publication. Next I analysed all progress reports by taking note of the innovations, planned and executed, per zone. Where I found corresponding features, I searched for concepts which would cover the essence of each one. In this way a first analysis took shape and a first report could be written in which ten characteristics were described.

This report was discussed at length in a meeting of representatives of the contact schools in October 1986. The ten characteristics proved to be recognisable and the concepts manageable in discussing school improvement, even for those delegates from schools where a particular characteristic did not apply.

Further discussions, watching video programmes of the Swedish and Dutch contact schools, and a visit to the Cypriot and German contact schools helped me to realise that a further four characteristics could be recognised in the progress reports as well as in the reality of the contact schools. This led to a second draft of the report in which these fourteen characteristics are mentioned, while the description of these characteristics was improved. This report, together with a summarised version, was consequently submitted to the last meeting of representatives of the contact schools: both texts were accepted subject to some amendments.

Before and during this meeting I collected data for a second research. This was meant to find out which of the characteristics would play a role in each one of the contact schools, either as an improvement already accomplished, or as an improved momentarily (March 1987) in the process of being realised. Furthermore I wanted to investigate in what manner school improvement takes place in the contact schools, which approach was being employed, and what differences could be recognised in the innovational efforts in the various zones. In this way I tried to find answers to the three questions mentioned before.

This publication on the Contact School Plan "School Improvement from Within" is the outcome of the above described pursuit.

Chapters 1 and 2 give a brief impression of the Contact School Plan and of the similarities and differences found among the schools. Chapter 4 explains the five zones. In Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 the characteristics of the contact schools, for each zone, are described. Chapter 10 provides a survey of the presence of these characteristics in the separate schools, and Chapter 11 elaborates on the results of the research on the manner in which school improvement was brought about.

Some concluding remarks, finally, are to be found in Chapter 12. With this a period of intensive activity, lasting more than a year, comes to its close. In it the qualitative analysis of the progress reports, the discussions among the representatives of the schools, the school visits and the further research took place. It was a fascinating endeavour which, at least for the contact schools themselves, resulted in a solid framework for thinking and communication about school improvement from within.

## 4. School improvement in different zones

In a school various zones can be distinguished in which improvement can take place. Between these zones there is a strong consistency that fluctuates, keeping things in balance: changes in one zone make changes in another zone necessary. There are five zones to be distinguished:

Zone 1: educational goals and principles
Zone 2: organisation of education
Zone 3: content of education
Zone 4: organisation of the co-operation of the teaching staff
Zone 5: organisation of external contacts.

I developed this model of the five zones when the schools with which I was working in the Netherlands started to feel a strong need for some expedient to prevent imbalance in school improvement:

"Do we keep the total development of one school sufficiently in mind when making decisions on changes?"

"Don't we make lopsided improvements?"

"Don't we overlook other important sectors in our school?"

"Do the changes that we have adopted affect other areas?"

The five zones delineate areas within which school improvement can take place. They also indicate coherence: changes in one zone give consequences in another, so that there, too, changes must be planned.

For instance: the introduction of working with mixed-age groups instead of working with single-age groups, or yearly grades. This happens to be an improvement in zone 2: "Organisation of education".

Those who are working on this more and more realise that the most important effect is: the possibility of having a greater influence on the social-emotional development of children. The need for a genuine image of oneself in each child is recognised. Discussion on this among all members of the team are held; fortunately, zone 4, the co-operation of the teaching staff, provides for this opportunity. These discussions then lead teachers to accepting this realistic self-image of children as an important principle to strive for in the pursuance of the educational goals of the school. This, by itself, is already an improvement within zone 1.

Next it is decided to prepare a programme of lessons for older children to teach them how to cope with emotions and to make them realise to what extent they should heed the presumed judgement which others will give to their behaviour: a change in zone 3. After this programme has been prepared and tried out on a small number of children, it is implemented in the whole school.

Around the same time a number of evening meetings for interested parents is organised to make them familiar with what this programme, which is being carried out with their children, pertains. This is an improvement in zone 5: "organisation of external contacts". Just an example of how school improvement goes from one zone to another, an example from the reality of the Dutch contact school.

Zone 1 is concerned with the aims and principles indicating the work of the teaching staff (not only didactic approach and organisation, but also pedagogy).

Zone 2 covers the circumstances under which the teaching staff can work (group division, the moving of children from one group to another, the report, the organisation within the groups, the work done with groups of mixed abilities, the use of space in the school).

Zone 3 is the subject matter, the aspect devoted to curriculum development, didactic approach, choice of activities, observations, evaluation and so on.

And zones 4 and 5 indicate how good organisation and good external contacts can bring education to its fullest advantage.

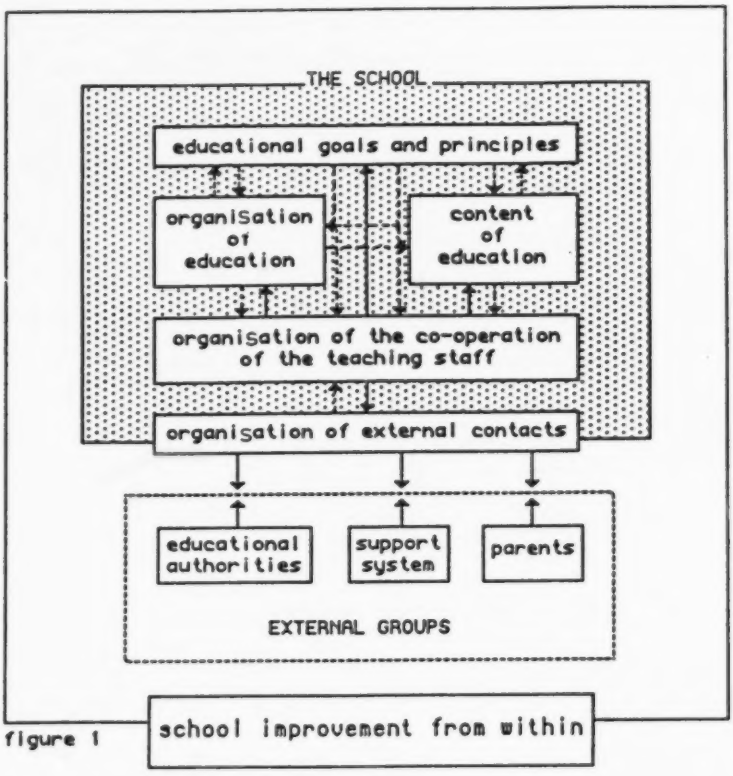



figure 1

This model shows some resemblance to the model of Miles and Ekholm(1); "The Nature of School Improvement". The solid arrows represent strategies and interventions undertaken, in particular, on the side of co-operating teachers. The broken arrows indicate in which direction changes within a particular zone are likely to exert influence.

I availed myself of this model of five zones, to be considered in school improvement from within, to analyse the progress reports of the twelve contact schools. For every zone I took notice of whatever was indicated as a subject of school improvement: subjects on which work had come to a close, as well as those still being worked on or just in the stage of planning and preparation(2). The analysis made it immediately obvious that in all contact schools the school improvement extended over several zones. In nine out of the twelve schools there was mention of the desire to develop the school in a balanced and coherent manner by giving attention to various aspects of school work at the same time. This was regarded as an important characteristic of one's own efforts at school improvement.

Finally, the qualitative analysis of the progress reports yielded fourteen such characterics of school improvement: qualities which could be regarded as important and therefore worth striving for in the development

of the contact schools. Only those aspirations which in fact were being worked on, or had been, in a school as subject of change, were included in the analysis. Matters which were only mentioned as important, but which were not concretely worked on in the practice of a school, remained outside consideration.

A description of those characteristics found follows in the next chapters. From Chapter 10 onwards will follow the results of research which was undertaken in order to verify the outcome of the analysis of the progress reports.

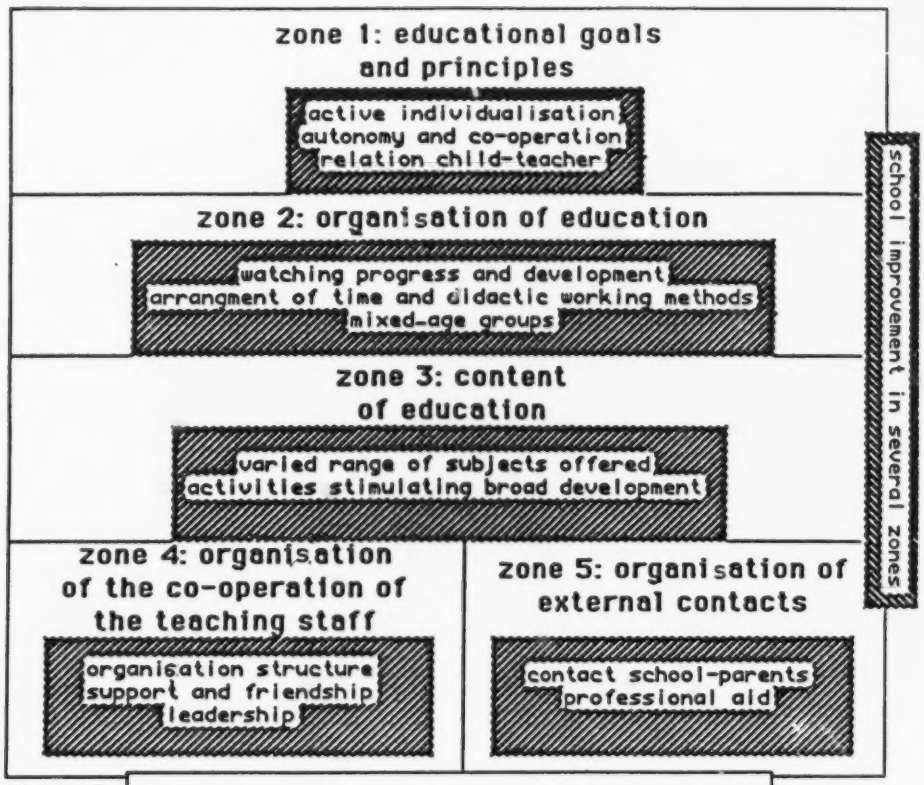

zone 1: educational goals and principles
active individualisation
autonomy and co-operation
relation child-teacher
zone 2: organisation of education
watching progress and development
arrangment of time and didactic working methods
mixed-age groups
zone 3: content of education
varied range of subjects offered
activities stimulating broad development
zone 4: organisation of the co-operation of the teaching staff
organisation structure
support and friendship
leadership
zone 5: organisation of external contacts
contact school-parents
professional aid
school improvement in several zones

figure 2 5 zones and 14 characteristics of school improvement in the contact schools

5. Similarities in zone 1: Educational goals and principles

In this zone three points stood out in the contact schools:

- active individualisation
- autonomy and co-operation
- relation child-teacher

ACTIVE INDIVIDUALISATION

In their improvement work the contact schools have been directing their attention to:

- letting children learn more
- letting children learn more useful things

not by offering all the children more subject matter, but by utilising all the abilities each child has, so that each child achieves a greater command of things that are relevant.

This is based on a certain knowledge and conception about learning and development, which we summarise below.

One important thing that we know about the learning process of 4 to 12-year-old children is:

Children learn most from "working" with concrete objects. Besides, and above all, they learn by first grasping things "intuitively" and from there arrive at the stage of working consciously.

This learning process is stimulated by verbal activity, by putting ideas into words, either to other children or to the teacher (who assists in this).

The differences between meaningful learning and rote learning also play a role here.

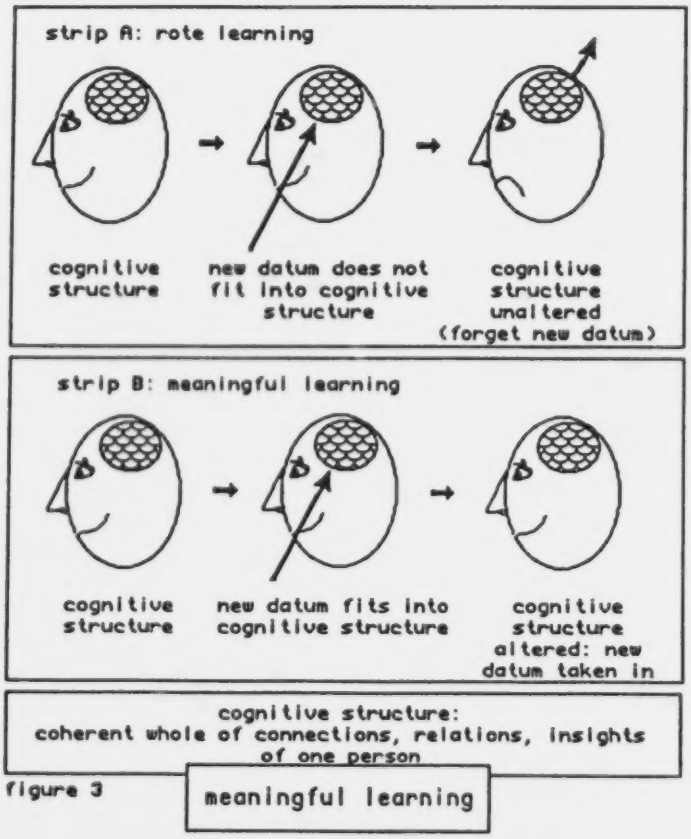

strip A: rote learning
cognitive structure
new datum does not fit into cognitive structure
cognitive structure unaltered
(forget new datum)
strip B: meaningful learning
cognitive structure
new datum fits into cognitive structure
cognitive structure altered: new datum taken in
cognitive structure:
coherent whole of connections, relations, insights of one person
meaningful learning

figure 3

If education of children is to be realised, and bearing in mind how children learn, then active individualisation is needed:

- children are confronted with things that they can, to some degree, be ready for (don't wait and see, but take in tow and be sure to pay attention to whether they are able to fasten the ropes);
- children are forced to take an active part in education, both mentally and physically, through which they must keep their minds on their work. For this, relatively open activities are necessary.
- During that active work, children get direct feedback from the teacher (correction, explanation, encouragement, confirmation, help).

The term "active individualisation" stands for the awareness of the fact that individualisation, taking into account the individual differences between children, is not only a case of presenting different subject matters to different children.

That is not enough: both the teacher and the child have to be active and activate each other in the teaching/learning process. This "active" aspect of active individualisation includes the concept of "interactive learning": learning which emphasises activity and the immediate return of information rather than written work, which needs the development of open-ended investigative styles of working in schools and which stimulates the development of problem-solving strategies by children(3).

AUTONOMY AND CO-OPERATION

An important aim of education is to create people who are able to do new things; people who do not only repeat what other generations have done. People who are creative, who are inventive, and who are discoverers.

A second aim of education is to shape minds that can be critical, that can verify things and that do not accept everything they are being offered.

A great threat to individual thinking comes from vogue words and terms, collective opinions, ready-made trends in thinking. People, as individuals, must be able to stand up against them, to be critical, to be able to discriminate between what has been proved and what has not been proved. Therefore we need children who are active, who at an early age learn to find out things for themselves, partly through their own spontaneous activity and partly through the material they are offered. Children who at an early age learn to tell what can be verified and what is an idea only that has been thought of by them.

To be able to exercise criticism and to choose individually, people need a good deal of specific knowledge and moral courage besides. A conformist education or traditional school does not encourage independent thinking. Many contact schools think it necessary to encourage autonomy right from the start, because they want to succeed in helping individuals reach the highest possible levels of emotional and cognitive development.

We cannot expect children to conform to the pressures of parents and school for the first ten years (or longer) of their lives and then suddenly expect them to show initiative and autonomy.

For many contact schools, the fundamental principle of "autonomy" has not resulted in children being trained to be individualists and egoists. On the contrary: the pursuit of autonomy as an attitude by each child implies the necessity to respect each other's autonomy. And children are taught this by explicitly bringing them into situations where co-operation is necessary both within the educational learning process and from deliberation about the rules that hold good in a particular group, up to having a say in the complete activities, lock, stock and barrel, of the whole school.

Co-operation, the working together and living together on the basis of equivalence and of respect for everybody's autonomy, forms the logical and psychological counterpart of autonomy in itself.

In many contact schools autonomy and co-operation are the leading principles that work on in the concrete composition of other starting points, for example:

- the co-operation and relatively open educational learning situations within "active individualisation"
- the working towards mutual respect and not exercising the use of power too much in order to solve problems between teacher and child within the "child-teacher relation"
- the lessening of the risk that a child runs of becoming a fixed stereotype in a class that has been together for years, by organising "mixed age groups" (Chapter 6)
- giving a wide-berth for the child's own initiative and contribution within "activities stimulating broad development" (Chapter 7).

CHILD-TEACHER RELATION

Quite a lot of contact schools ascertain that there is an increasing lack of satisfying social relations between children and adults. That is why they think it an explicit task for the school to provide the children, for the sake of the development of their personality, with certain models, by way of the adults working there, with whom they can identify themselves: somebody whom you care for, who is interested in you (not only in your new jumper), who is open about him/herself, who has an identity of his/her own. This places teachers in the situation of having to enter into individual relationships with individual children (instead of a collective relation with a group). And that requires an organisation of a group in which there is time for "one-to-one contacts".

At some schools this principle has led to explicit educational activities in the field of "learning to work together" and "self-control/ learning to be myself" for the older children. It also asks for open contacts with parents about the child as a person. A task that teachers also bring in is: associating with adults. At many schools both the necessity and the difficulty have been ascertained.

6. Similarities in zone 3: Organisation of education

In this zone the answers are given to questions like:

How are children divided among the teaching staff? Are the groups formed according to standard or grade? Or are classes of combined grades (or standards)? Or are children of different ages consciously grouped together? How is a group formed then? How long do the children usually stay in a group? How many times in a school year can children be "moved"? Are reports given? About what? Has each teacher a permanent group of children? If not, what then?

In the contact schools three distinctive points clearly stand out:

- watching progress and development
- arrangement of time and didactic working methods
- mixed-age groups.

WATCHING OVER PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT

The organisation of the learning process is much more complicated at the contact schools than in traditional education where all children in a class are busy working at the same thing.

The realisation of principles like "active individualisation", "activities stimulating broad development" and sometimes "mixed age groups" provide a situation in which the teacher is not automatically aware of the children's progress and their development. Without special measures there is an increased risk or remaining in the dark, the teacher's unawareness of the slackening or even the stagnation of progress or development of a child in a particular area. And this would be the opposite of what postulates like "active individualisation" and "varied range of subjects offered" are meant to accomplish, namely: to make the most of the potentialities of every child as effectively as possible.

For education to be as effective as possible for every child, the teacher must, of course, be well informed about all the actions of every child. In the contact schools this proved to be one of the most crucial points: keeping in touch by paying great attention to the registration of the progress made by children.

Use is made of summative tests and especially of formative evaluation, built into the learning process and after that applicable in the following learning process.

At the contact schools many ways of systematic observation and registration have been developed by the teachers or experts who were assisting them and these are being used a lot in the schools.

Sometimes the abundant data available about the child are also used to give a detailed report about the child's progress to its parents.

Many teachers in the contact schools find that, apart from getting used to "autonomy and co-operation" and "personal child-teacher relation", they have to attain an attitude towards continual evaluation in order to learn to

work in an effective and relaxed way within the complexity of individualised education. To obtain concrete knowledge in this field, training for the teachers was, and is, organised in the contact schools, internally, or with the help of experts. This is also a good way to settle in new colleagues.

ARRANGEMENT OF TIME AND DIDACTIC WORKING METHODS

From the discussions about the progress reports and my first draft of the analysis during the meetings of the representatives of the contact schools rather than from the progress reports themselves, it appears that similarities in organising activities in a class or group can also be found in quite a number of contact schools.

It is clear that a day-planning for children is strived for, in which the working methods used also provide for variety. Next to individual activities and activities in groups, it appears that in education based upon individualisation, there is quite a lot that the whole class, TOGETHER, can do, experience, express, celebrate, discuss, arrange, evaluate.

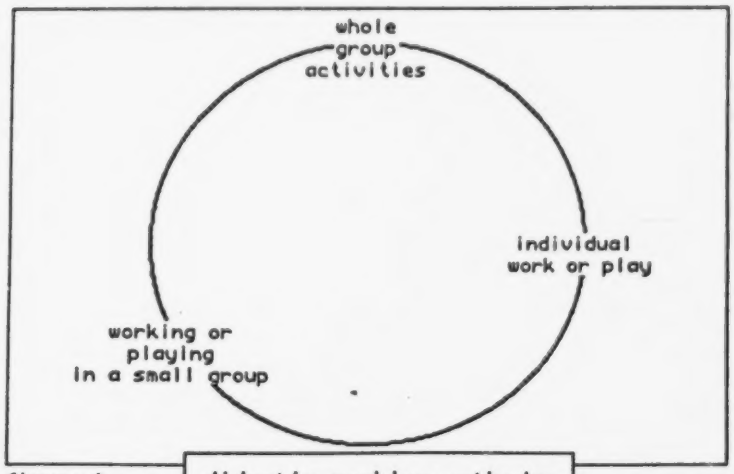



figure 4 didactic working methods: activity circle

In a number of schools a fixed, regular number of successive activities was found necessary for the younger children (up to about 8 years). A fixed rhythm during the day is considered conducive to the clarity and feeling of security of the children and works to support the development of their awareness of time.

By diversifying various working methods, a number of contact schools have taken into account a division of what we could call "three sorts of time": diffused time, individual time, optimum time(4).

Diffused time

In the contact schools classrooms are active places. For teachers and children this means that they are being flooded with incoming stimuli: four children playing a group game, three children discussing questions about a text they have read, two children working with construction material, three children reading a book, two children walking from their working place to the library, the teacher instructing seven children how to read in a melodious and natural way ...

In these circumstances children learn how to screen incoming stimuli: which noises, feelings, sights, or tastes to pay attention to, and which to ignore. Concentration, for the most part, is the use of energy to suppress awareness of all incoming stimuli except one or two. Ultimately any teacher's or child's supply of energy that is used to suppress awareness becomes exhausted. Children - and teachers - cannot stand "diffusion" (and confusion) all the time.

Individual time

Individual time has the quality of decreased sensory input. It is important to recognise that each person in a learning environment must be able to get some time alone, time away from the "maddening crowd", time to think, to process, to recharge, to work or play on his/her own. A long list could be made of all the solutions for this problem that have been found in the contact schools. Some examples: "quiet corners" in the classroom or outside, individual study cabins, special "solo places" outside the classroom, use of places like the library, the teachers' room and stock rooms, vision screens to divide the classroom into several spaces, use of headphones and cassette recorder.

Optimum time

Optimum time is interpersonal time, one to one, between the teacher and the child. Good relationships can be built. But to do it, teachers must create some one-to-one time with children. In the contact schools that work on the principle of "active individualisation" one-to-one time is often combined with the time that is needed for the direct feedback from the teacher on a child's work. If a classroom is arranged to meet the need for individual time, it will give the teacher the opportunity to find quiet places for optimum time too.

Of course all this can only be realised if the teacher manages to organise the activities in his class efficiently: without the need for continuous instructing and arranging behaviour of the teacher.

MIXED-AGE GROUPS

In the contact schools we find schools organised in age groups as well as schools organised in mixed-age groups. In some countries there is a strong tradition in organising schools in combined classes; mostly in small schools where teachers manage their combined classes by organising most of the teaching and learning in "sub-classes". In fact they succeed in handling three or more year-classes in one classroom. In some countries (eg Finland) a lot of work is done to change this rigid organisation into a more vivid and flexible way of classroom management.

It is clear that the remaining features of the contact schools can be realised very well both in age groups and in mixed-age groups. The consequence of a number of these features is that no strong limits concerning subject matter can exist between the successive groups in a school: this restricts, notably, the realisation of the principle of "active individualisation".

In some countries the traditional subject matter limits between groups or classes are impossible because of the integration of handicapped children. In Norway, for example, a law makes integration of handicapped children into the local school a parent's right to choose. In some contact schools there is quite a special type of mixed-age group present or in development; this type of mixed-age group had advantages in the area of influences on the personality development of children. This is especially due to the fact that the social status of a child with regard to the other children in his group can be changed more easily.

These special mixed-age groups present the following characteristics:

- Children of different ages are together in one group (2 to 3 years difference).
- The individual differences between those children are taken seriously in education; activities are organised in such a way that children can also learn from each other.
- The children in the mixed-age groups do a lot of things together, do many things in small groups and they also do things by themselves.
- Within the mixed-age group, homogeneous groups can be distinguished in the "cognitive areas". These groups vary in composition.
- Children remain in a group for longer than a year (often 2 to 3 years). Moving to another group can take place more than once in one year.

The following reasons are mentioned for working within this kind of mixed-age group:

1. Organisation of mixed-age groups offers more opportunities for development regarding the social-emotional aspects. The children are able to gain experience from a changing social position within the group. Regularly, children move on to another group. So the child experiences another child's change when it joins the group as a "beginner" and has to be helped to get used to this new situation until the child has become familiar with it, and can help other children to feel at home in the "new" situation. Generally, children are with the same teacher for about two years.

2. Within mixed-age groups, it becomes possible to offer children more opportunities to learn from each other because there will be more differences in development, and learning is determined, to a minor extent, by being able to keep up with the learning process to a greater or smaller degree.

3. Working in mixed-age groups offers better opportunities to guarantee a continual development. Furthermore, the system of failing or passing on to a next year is abandoned, and replaced by shifting-moments that occur three times a year.

4. By establishing mixed-age groups, the teaching matter and "class year" in which the child functions are no longer linked. This diminishes or obliterates difficulties encountered by the child in the current system.

The last three points could be realised in age groups too. The first point gives the specific benefit of this kind of mixed-age group. At the contact schools it can be seen clearly that the need to work in mixed-age groups is also connected to the degree with which the presentation of subject matter has been disconnected from particular year classes or ages. At some schools a development can be seen in which a number of stages can be marked out; this development is shown in figure 5.

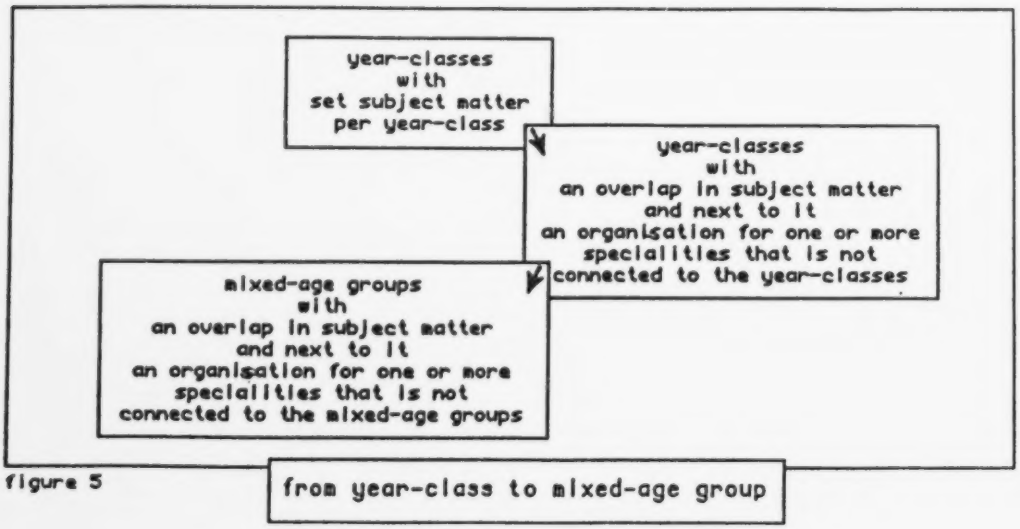



figure 5

## 7. Similarities in zone 3: Content of education

School improvement in primary education is often only about this area: in this, improvements relating to the content or didactic approach to a subject are made. At the contact schools there is always something more going on. There is also improvement in other zones. Does this explain perhaps their success at innovation?

It is exactly in this zone that the diversity is great and very much tied to the macro-level: the national school system and traditions. With some difficulty it seems, after all, that two similarities can also be pointed out here: two characteristics that hold good for many contact schools:

- varied range of subjects offered
- activities stimulating broad development.

### VARIED RANGE OF SUBJECTS OFFERED

At all contact schools it was realised that in order to get the most out of children a varied range of subjects is needed. To discover all the talents of the children and to help them develop these talents further, attention must be paid to many and various things.

- Many "areas of knowledge" and "areas of expression" are therefore presented in relation to daily life.
- At the level of primary education it is, above all, getting to know and taking bearings of all possibilities; in this, playful activities, self-expression and experiences are of the greatest importance. Only towards the end of the school period can a command of techniques also play a role to some extent.
- This applies, at least, to world-orientation, art education and computer education.

- Of course one teacher cannot usually inspire and stimulate the children in all these areas of development. Concerning these areas the tradition of "one teacher one class" has therefore been broken for the older children at some contact schools.

ACTIVITIES STIMULATING BROAD DEVELOPMENT

By "activities stimulating broad development" we mean activities of which it is difficult to say which subject area they belong, because they are important for many subjects. An example:

In a discussion children learn, of course, a lot about the language but their power of concentration and their specific skills of listening are also stimulated. The opinions, ideas and experiences of different

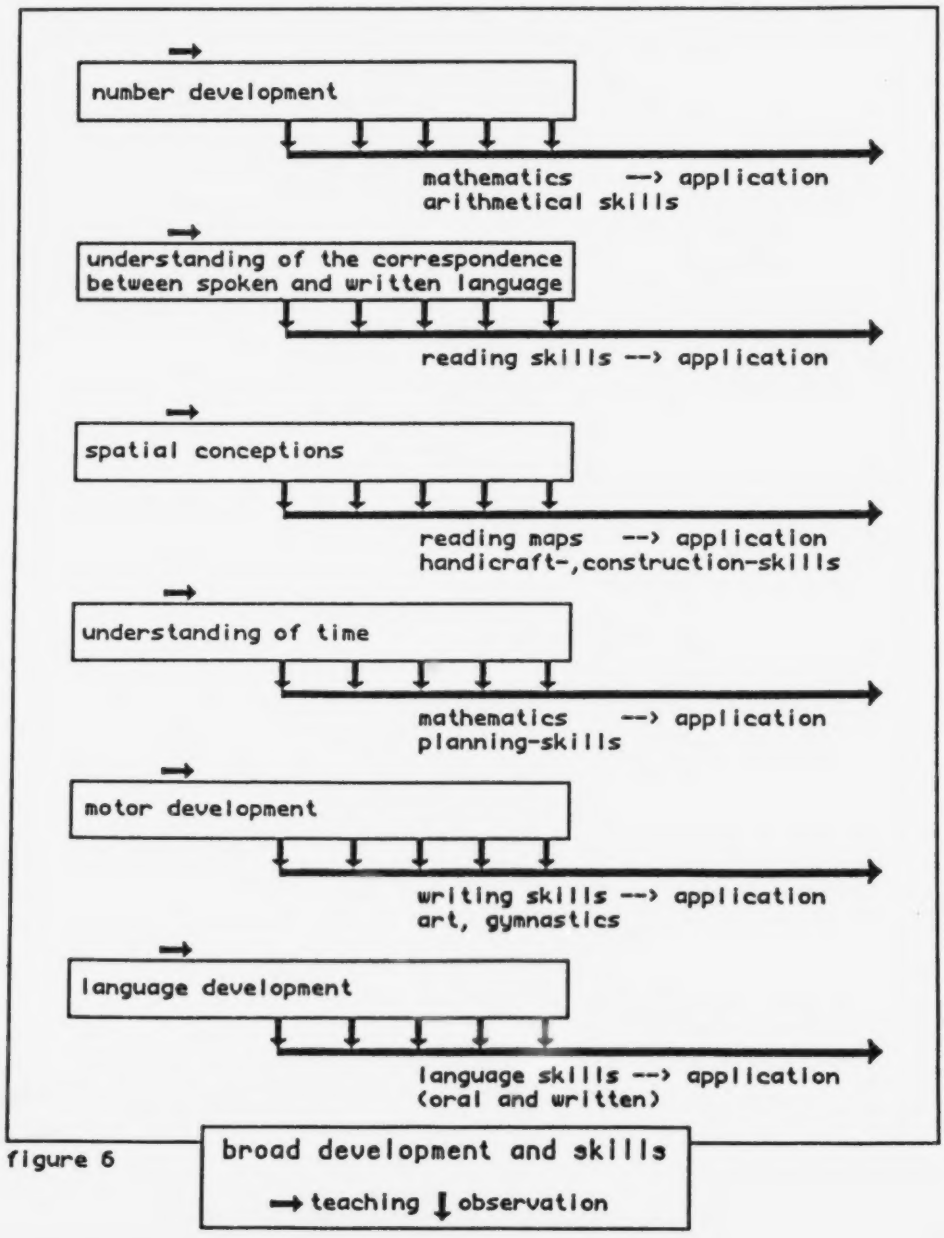



figure 6

children come up for discussion and the experiences and information of the teacher are passed on. And so at the same time an important aspect of world orientation takes place. And there is even a chance that some children will learn something in the area of their verbal and non-verbal ability of expression.

At any rate it is clear that such an activity as "discussion" presents possibilities for very broad development in many subject areas. Of course there is much more than "discussion". For example, other activities that can usually be done by the whole group together, such as: reading aloud and narrating, celebration (beginning and ending the week, ending the month and such like), outdoor games, indoor games (in a playroom or hall for example), gymnastics, language games and such like.

And further, many activities that can usually be done in small groups or individually too. These activities can be thought of: reading library books, working with picture books, reading-writing corner, construction activities, working and playing at the water and sand table, working with development material (mosaic, lottos, puzzles, group games and suchlike), working in a drawing and painting corner, writing corner, working with construction material etc.

Activities stimulating broad development are certainly very necessary for 4 to 8-year-olds. And they are still necessary for older children. In these sorts of activities children can construct their fundamental views: "an inner frame" upon which they can "hang up" further specific knowledge and skills; without such a well-developed frame much knowledge that is to be learnt becomes meaningless.

From the above it has become apparent that the attention to activities stimulating broad development is closely linked to the principle of "active" individualisation". The importance of activities stimulating broad development also comes from the fact that many contact schools in their school improvement are looking for a synthesis between what could be defined as "playing" and "learning". Especially with younger children, we are dealing with good infant school activities on the one hand (activities like sand/water play, block building, motor development activities) and on the other hand learning to read, arithmetic and writing. Subsequently the matter of the development of the children wants to be gone into. But how? "By simply letting them do the activities they need, activities they are ready for!" "And you call that 'simply'?"

To be able to do this, teachers must know when it is the right time to start reading, arithmetic or writing without making blunders. And they must know what the "infant school activities" are really good for. And they must be able to discriminate what skill is behind in development, and the subject matter you can learn at a particular moment.

The following applies to all these development lines:

- they are in relation to each other
- they require rather open, active and also verbally performed activities; these are, above all, activities stimulating broad development.

8. Similarities in zone 4: Organisation of the co-operation of the teaching staff

First the limitations of this zone: it does not go further than the teaching staff. The reason for this is that we are describing common characteristics here. At a few contact schools, however, this zone is in fact more extensive because the non-teaching staff is definitely involved in the organised team work too.

In this zone the school is managed, decisions are taken, discussions are held, support is provided. In the contact schools three striking similar features can be found:

- organisation structure
- support and friendship
- leadership.

THE ORGANISATION STRUCTURE

In most present-day schools, the organisation structure is, on the whole, quite unclear. The experiences in the contact schools teach us that as long as everything runs well this does not matter. But in this way a school is unable to cope with any conflict. The meaning of organisation structure is: how are the decision-making, mutual help and relief and financial control arranged? Who decides what takes place in a class? And so on. It is of great importance that good agreements are made about these matters. And that a well-ordered outline is noted down.

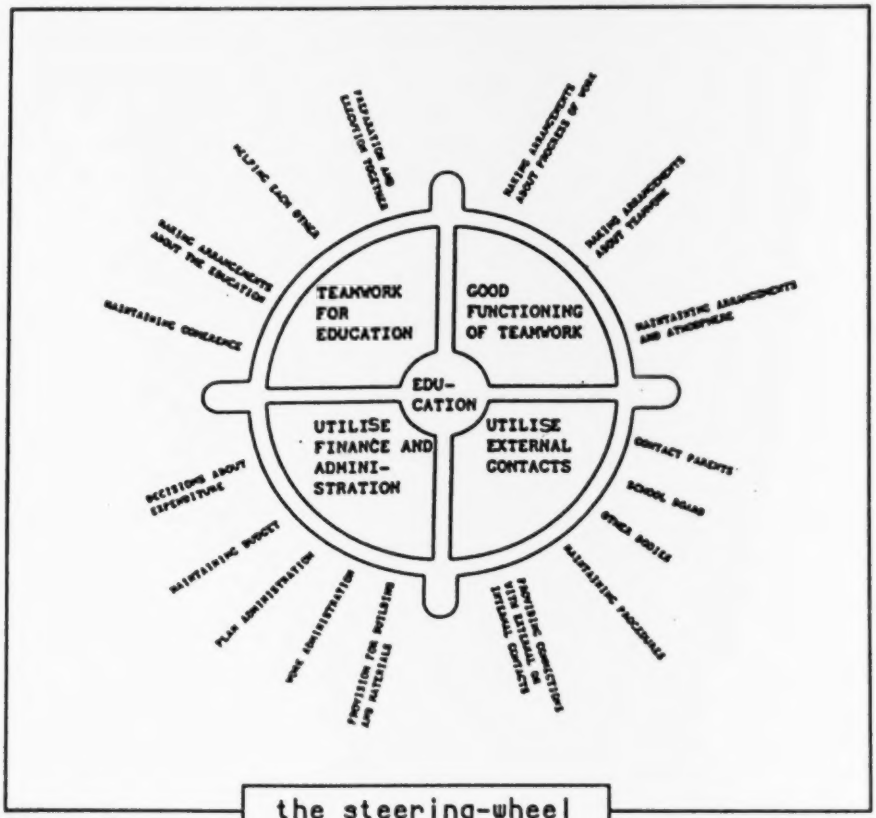



figure 7

the steering-wheel of school management

Most contact schools have a clear internal organisation or are, among other things, improving school in this zone. The various aspects of it are to be found in figure 7. Also the parts of zone 5 are mentioned in it. With a little goodwill and imagination on the reader's part, a steering-wheel can be recognised.

In a number of contact schools a development has taken place in which the organisation structure of a collection of practices, agreed upon or otherwise, has been consciously worked out or changed into a well-set out organisation structure and which has been explicitly laid down by the teachers.

On the whole that evolution has taken place under the influence of the possibilities that arose: obstinate or incapable teachers, negative reactions to school improvement from the outside world, arguments between teachers, unexpected events during the process of school improvement and such like.

During such a difficult period, it became evident that there was a need for a less hazy arrangement of the organisation structure, less based on goodwill from every involved person. In the outline below, a school can be placed with the help of a vertical line: the intersection of the white and grey parts of the rectangle indicate the extent to which the organisation structure is based upon: explicit agreements (white) and habits (grey).

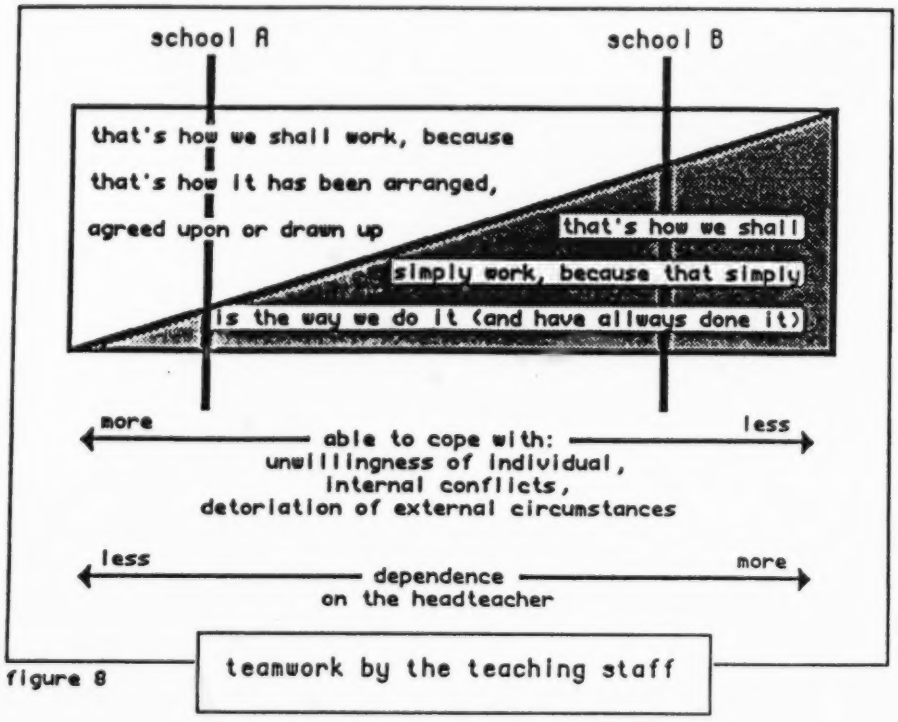



figure 8

Two examples: In school A a great part of the organisation structure has been clearly drawn up; in school B work is mainly being done in accordance with the habits that have come into being.

The arrows indicate the number of consequences.

Merely the fact that an organisation structure has been drawn up well and has been laid down by the teachers does not, of course, make it a good organisation structure. In addition three points play an important role:

- CLARITY (the structure must be concrete and clear for all those concerned, at least about the tasks that are expected of every individual)

- PERCEPTION (in a good organisation structure teachers do not do "everything together", the work that is done by sub-groups or individuals must, however, remain perceptible to those who are not directly involved)

- CONSISTENCY (an organisation structure is not an aim in itself; it must be a means through which education and school improvement can pivot on in a good manner, nothing less but also nothing more).

SUPPORT AND FRIENDSHIP

In the contact schools a lot of attention is paid to the organisation of the segment "teamwork for education". A good support structure in the school by which contact and mutual help among the teachers concerning the daily work with children is provided is indispensable for a good school.

At a school you do not, after all, only work to earn your living. People (and that means teachers too) also have social needs in their work: the need to belong, to have contact with colleagues, to experience support.

Next to these needs, teachers are in need of recognition: success in work, in need of respect and appreciation. And, further, teachers want to prove their capacities, to develop their talents.

On account of such an observation at the Falkenberg meeting, the following poster came about.

LEADERSHIP

The role of the head teacher is important in all contact schools. This person can have an important positive as well as negative influence. It seems that head teachers with a positive influence share their authority and powers of decision-making with other and involve more people when carrying into effect the tasks associated with a head teacher.

At the contact schools, there appear to be three sorts of tasks associated with leadership, that can be distinguished. With some examples they have been set out below:

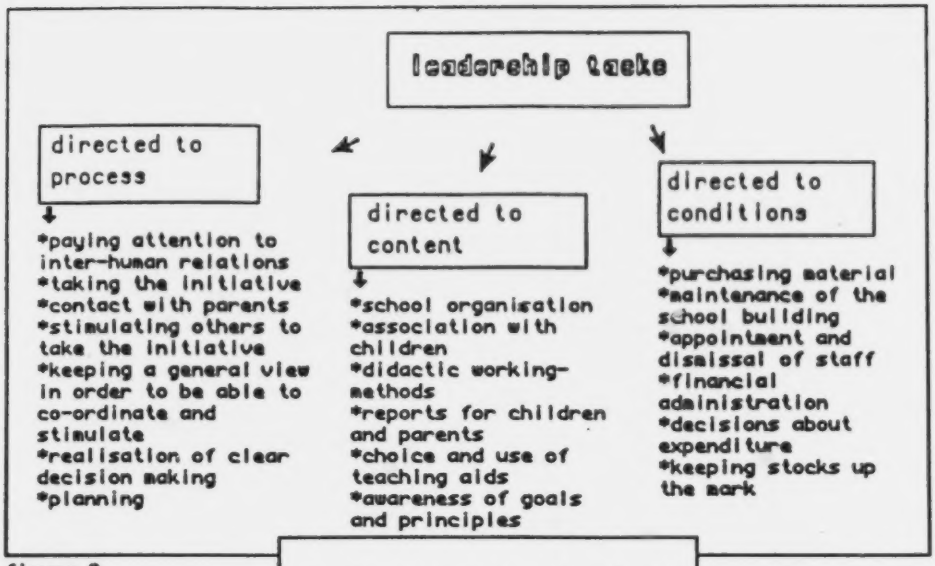

leadership tasks
directed to process
*paying attention to inter-human relations
*taking the initiative
*contact with parents
*stimulating others to take the initiative
*keeping a general view in order to be able to co-ordinate and stimulate
*realisation of clear decision making
*planning
directed to content
*school organisation
*association with children
*didactic working-methods
*reports for children and parents
*choice and use of teaching aids
*awareness of goals and principles
directed to conditions
*purchasing material
*maintenance of the school building
*appointment and dismissal of staff
*financial administration
*decisions about expenditure
*keeping stocks up the mark
leadership tasks at school

figure 9

This division can even be used to distinguish three "types" of head teacher:

- head teacher mainly directed to conditions
- head teacher mainly directed to content
- head teacher mainly directed to process.

From discussions between the representatives of the contact schools, one type of head teacher suitable for school improvement from within emerged; (s)he should be:

- above all directed to the process: the ability to associated with people, conscious of aims, without putting himself in the forefront too much, incorruptible and courageous,
- but also directed to content: an expert on one or more aspects of education, strong intentions in the areas of progress and wellbeing of children,
- less directed to conditions: inclined to delegate tasks in this area and allocate these tasks among various teachers, no inclination to take advantage especially in this area.

9. Similarities in zone 5: Organisation of external contacts

"External contacts" is a notion that can bring about a little confusion. What "external" is depends upon what is included in the notion "school".

If you consider the parents and the school board as part of the school too, then the contacts between the teachers and parents or members of the school board are internal contacts. When giving a name to this zone we have only considered the contacts between teachers and children and the mutual contact among teachers as internal contacts.

Within zone 5, the external contacts include:

- contact with school board
- contact with parents
- contact with establishments outside the school.

A striking similarity at the contact schools is the great attention paid to: school-parents contact. Professional aid from outside experts is a second common feature in this zone.

SCHOOL-PARENTS CONTACT

The way in which contact schools pursue the object of more positive contacts with parents has been very varied. Agreed upon by everyone is the conviction and the experience that these contacts are badly needed, especially because through the involvement of parents the involvement and motivation of the children are increased. Next to this, the consideration of democratisation at some contact schools plays a role.

In the contacts between school and parents, two divisions can be made:

- contacts directed to the child
- contacts directed to the school.

Contact directed to the child is about the parent's own children. Sometimes very direct: visits to the home, parents' evening, monthly contact meetings, parents who just come into the school without an appointment, all of them possibilities that occur in the contact schools. Information in writing also plays a role: the report of the progress of the child, pieces of work, drawings and full exercise books that are taken home, homework. Not all contacts directed to the child are about the individual child. It may vary at the contact schools from class-evenings, public lessons and exhibitions, to a course for parents about associating with children.

The contacts directed to school are intended to involve the parents generally in the school events. In the multitude of activities that we came across at the contact schools, three divisions can be made.

Working together: school paper editorial staff, garden committee, carpentry work group, paper-cover group, reading parents, handicraft parents

Thinking together: parents' evening, participating/advisory council, involvement in the school work plan

General contacts: parents' evening, bicycle rally, walking puzzle trip, barbecue, intercultural manifestation, a day of games, loose stencils with news, parents' paper, children's paper.

An overall picture can be found in the outline below.

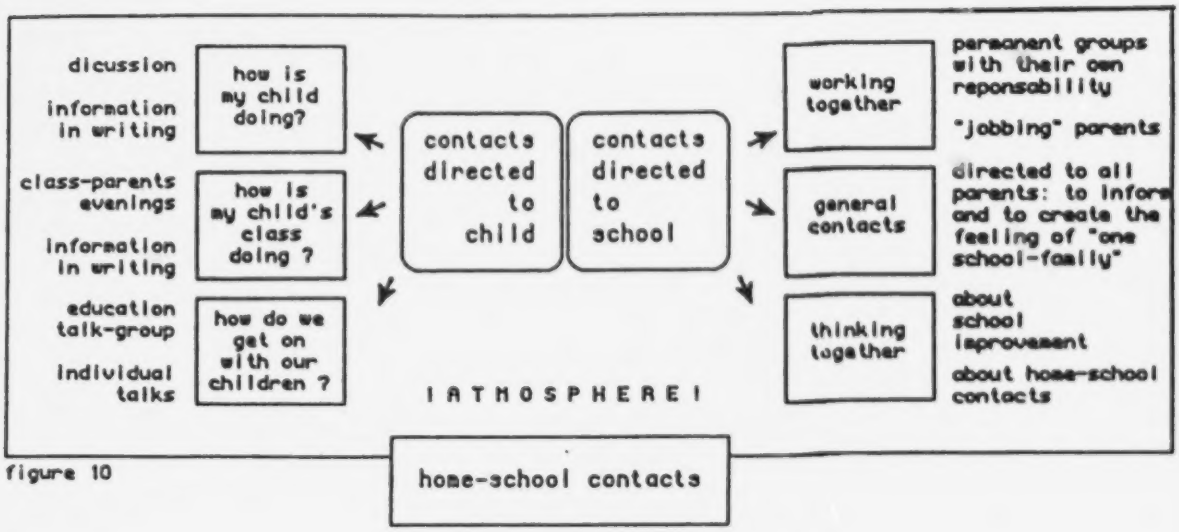



figure 10

For the contact schools it is clear that the determining factor is the atmosphere in which the contacts take place.

A POSITIVE ATTITUDE BY TEACHERS TOWARDS PARENTS IS THE SUCCESS OF SCHOOL-PARENTS CONTACTS.

PROFESSIONAL AID

In discussions between the representatives of the contact schools, a recurrent theme came up regularly: the privilege or lack of good expert support for the teachers. The possibilities of having experts at one's disposal are very different, the causes of which are, above all, to be found at the macro-level again: in this area the opportunities made available to schools are very varied according to the country or region. For some schools it is almost impossible to make use of external experts, while for others they are a permanent part of their working method. The clearest example of the latter are those of a Cypriot contact school which is associated with the College of Education of Nicosia and the Dutch contact school which has the permanent support of the Regional Pedagogic Centre, Zealand.

The contact schools where the possibilities of recruiting external help are available, consider that help indispensable for:

- training and courses responding to the needs of the school,
- systematically setting up changes,
- giving advice about children who are behind or stand out in their development, progress and social behaviour,

- during discussions, the participants teach to make decisions, to listen to each other, and to respond properly,
- development of working methods for "active individualisation", together with the teachers,
- advising and giving support to the head teacher in his tasks directed to process.

10. The characteristics in the various contact schools

In the chapters before we mentioned the occurrence of some fourteen characteristics which, in relation to the five zones, form specific features in the school improvement within the contact schools. Our analysis led to the following list of these features:

- a school in innovation must develop in all five zones in order to be able to keep up with school improvement and be coherent,
- active individualisation,
- autonomy and co-operation,
- child-teacher relation,
- watching progress and development,
- arrangement of time and didactic working methods,
- mixed-age groups,
- varied range of subjects offered,
- activities stimulating broad development ,
- organisation structure,
- support and friendship,
- leadership,
- school-parents contact,
- professional aid.

These main characteristics of primary education are to be found at the contact schools. However, not all these points together are always found at every school. It is precisely the combination made by every contact school of a number of these that makes the school what it is.

The representatives of the contact schools were asked by letter to indicate which of the fourteen characteristics are important in the school improvement at their schools(5). They had to make a distinction between improvement that already had taken place, that already has tangible effects in school and improvement that was in operation at that moment.

At the meeting of the representatives in March 1987 the answers to these questions were discussed to make sure that all representatives interpreted the questions and the characteristics in the same way.

The next diagram provides a survey of the number of schools that worked on each of the fourteen features.

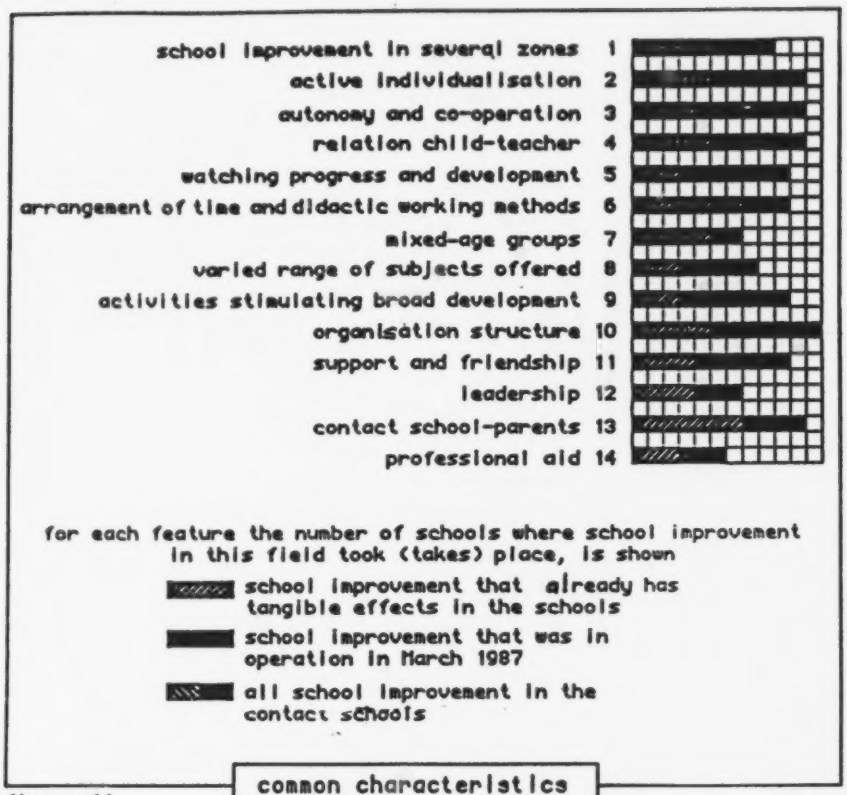

school improvement in several zones 1
active individualisation 2
autonomy and co-operation 3
relation child-teacher 4
watching progress and development 5
arrangement of time and didactic working methods 6
mixed-age groups 7
varied range of subjects offered 8
activities stimulating broad development 9
organisation structure 10
support and friendship 11
leadership 12
contact school-parents 13
professional aid 14
for each feature the number of schools where school improvement in this field took (takes) place, is shown
school improvement that already has tangible effects in the schools
school improvement that was in operation in March 1987
all school improvement in the contact schools

figure 11

common characteristics of school improvement in the contact schools

The most important conclusion to be drawn from this overview is that those characteristics which became apparent through the qualitative analysis of the progress reports, the discussions at the meetings and the visits to schools were, indeed, to a great extent, the subjects of school improvement in the contact schools. Each of these subjects occurs in at least 50% of the contact schools. The average percentage of schools that work on a characteristic is 79%.

Naturally one can draw no conclusion about the importance of a particular characteristic merely from the fact that it is, or was, a subject of school improvement. A characteristic that is, or was, a subject of school improvement in seven schools, is no less important than one that was taken up by eleven schools. The warning not to use the above diagram to make statements about greater or lesser importance was emphasised at the meeting of representatives of the contact schools, held in March 1987 at Strasbourg.

There are some differences when we compare the school improvement already accomplished with the total of the improvements. Of particular interest is the impression it gives on what was tackled first by the schools (even to the extent of having already produced tangible results)

and what they are busy with now. One should bear in mind that those subjects on which school improvement has already been accomplished continue to play an important role in the school.

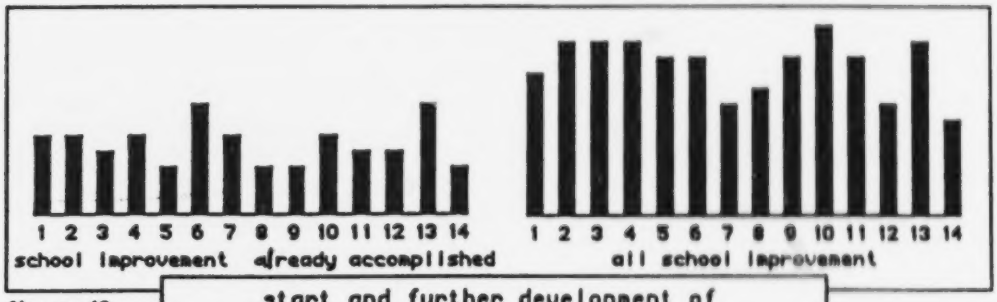



figure 12 start and further development of school improvement within the contact schools

"Arrangement of time and didactic working methods" (No. 6), and "school-parents contacts" (No. 13) are most obviously present in the starting period of the improvement in the contact schools.

Comparing the two graphs one may notice that the greatest differences occur in the areas of:

- autonomy and co-operation (3)
- watching progress and development (5)
- organisation structure (10).

These apparently are matters which become important, in many areas, only at a later date.

In the case of "autonomy and co-operation" this variance results from the experience that more individualised teaching requires children more and more to work independently.

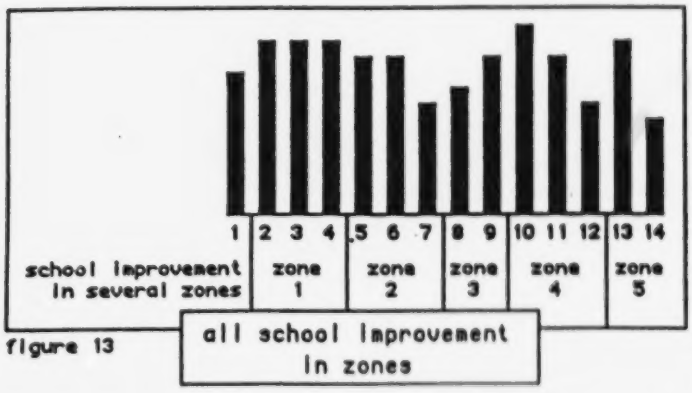
Children are not able to do this all of a sudden, used as they are to the accustomed approach of "do as you are told". Soon the teachers realise the need the teach the children explicitly how to work by themselves and how to co-operate properly. At that stage it becomes a matter of school improvement by itself.

Attention for "watching progress and development" is somehow similar. One effect of diversification in the teaching approach is that the teachers lose immediate control over what the children are actually doing. Whereas formerly, before school improvement started, all children were doing the same thing at the same time, it now differs from child to child; soon the teachers become aware of the need for a systematic approach in order to keep track of the children's "progress and development". So, introducing systems of observation and registration, of formative assessment, now also becomes a new objective for the school's efforts at school improvement.

By March 1987 "organisation structure" was, or had been, a subject of school improvement at all contact schools, which makes it the only one of the fourteen characteristics to have been taken up by all schools.

This sequence of events is, in fact, the outcome of processes already described in chapter 8: because of problems experienced in the making of decisions (such as friction among teachers, a desire to involve parents as well, or even the pressure of work upon the teachers), the need is felt to make "consultation and decision-making" itself a subject of school improvement.

The desired outcome of these efforts would be a clear, efficient and well-functioning organisation structure.


1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14
school improvement in several zones
zone 1
zone 2
zone 3
zone 4
zone 5
all school improvement in zones
figure 13

Finally we could attempt to investigate whether and how the efforts of the contact schools at the several zones are at variance. The main conclusion from the accompanying graph, however, seems to be that sufficient attention is paid to all zones, which is not so strange considering that one of the features of the contact schools is to work on school improvement in more than one zone.

From examining the graph it also becomes noticeable that zone 1 is strongly present in the contact schools: explicit attention to educational goals and principles. One consequence of the ample attention given to zone 1 is that more school improvement has actually taken place in the other zones than the diagram would suggest:

- Characteristic 2: "Active individualisation" has very significant implications for classroom management, and so for characteristic 6: "arrangement of time and didactic working methods", and the whole of zone 3, the content of education.

- Characteristic 3: "Autonomy and co-operation" has a direct bearing on zone 2, the organisation of education, as well as on the way in which teachers execute their own authority and mutual co-operation (zone 4) and on how they co-operate with other people or institutions from outside the school (zone 5).

- Characteristic 4: "child-teacher relation" calls for time to be spent on individual contact with children and parents, and so it is related to characteristic 6, the arrangement of time and didactic working methods, and to characteristic 13, school-parents contact. Besides, mindfully dealing with children needs mindfully dealing with colleagues, which shows how characteristic 4 bears a strong influence on zone 4, co-operation of teachers.

11. Approaches in school improvement in the contact schools

In his contribution to the final report on Project no. 8 (Chapter 3), Maurice Galton describes six "styles of innovation" that have been identified from the case studies which have been carried out during the period of the project(6).

The first style of innovation he describes is the course development approach. Here teachers attend courses, held under the auspices of the local authority, where the aims and methods of the innovation are explained. These teachers then go back to their schools and act as "change agents". Their task is to persuade their colleagues to carry out the innovation. Each school is free to decide how it will carry out the programme within the resources provided. A number of research studies, however, show that this style of innovation seldom achieves the desired changes in classroom practice because the teacher, returning from the course, does not feel confident enough to take on the work of trainer.

A modification of this style is the training team approach which seeks to overcome this difficulty. Here a local authority selects a group of experienced expert teachers to help plan the in-service programme and then act as group leaders during the course.

Subsequently these teachers travel round the schools which are taking part in the innovation supporting the attempts of teachers to implement the changes in their own classrooms by diagnosing difficulties and giving additional training where necessary. This style of innovation has been used to introduce a programme designed to increase the use of micro-computers within the primary classroom in the City of Leeds (described in one of the case studies).

At the other extreme is the school-based approach where a single school implements changes in response to problems which the staff, as a whole, have identified. Such programmes are often a response to a specific need in the local community as in the Italian case study where a school attempted to improve the levels of literacy through the use of television ("Teaching through mass media for the acquisition of basic language skills" - DECS/EGT (86) 10 of 28 January 1986.)

In this style of innovation the solution to a problem usually arises as a result of a consensus among the staff. Where agreement is arrived at in this way the level of commitment to the innovation by the staff is likely to be high but the process is a very slow one and is not very suitable for large-scale innovations. Some headteachers also find it difficult to cope with the democratic structure without support.

A number of countries have adopted this model and instituted a cluster approach style of innovation whereby a cluster (or a group) of schools identify a similar problem and then work together to solve it. Schools continue to adapt the innovation programme to meet their particular needs, but also come together from time to time to share experiences and to support each other whenever difficulties arise. This style of innovation has considerable advantages. The schools can share resources and it is also possible for teachers with particular experiences or expertise to be shared out amongst

the group of schools. This style of innovation has been tried in France, as described in the French case study where a group of schools have attempted to solve the problem of pupils who «drop out» of the system («Relations between school establishments and relations between the school and its social environment - ZEP (Zone d'éducation prioritaire - Priority education area) at Grigny la Grande-Borne (France)», DECS/EGT (86) 17 of 24 February 1986).

The fifth style of innovation which has been identified from the case studies use a consultancy approach. Here, unlike the training team approach, the consultant is not associated with a particular in-service programme with its own set of objectives and procedures. Schools attempt to identify their own problems and the consultant's role is to help each school clarify issues, arrive at solutions and then evaluate these. The consultant usually has knowledge of evaluation procedures and perhaps some training social psychology which allows him to help teachers cope with the stresses that can arise within a school when some staff resist the proposed changes.

Notable by its absence was a style of innovation called the cascade approach where training is focused on key staff who become responsible for the training of others who then in turn train more staff. This style may be used regionally or locally or within an institution itself.

In the United Kingdom, for example, it is one of the main ways in which local authorities are attempting to overcome weaknesses of school-based approaches which, while increasing the commitment of staff, requires considerable resources. Such innovations are very slow to spread beyond the individual school because the teachers involved generally feel that the solution to their particular problem is not capable of being adapted to other institutions. The cascade approach provides groups of consultants who "can act as links between different schools and identify common features within the innovation".

The representatives of the contact schools were asked to point out which approaches were used in their schools. Per approach that was used they had to add information about the content of the school improvement. The content had to be indicated in terms of the 14 characteristics(7).

The answer to these questions were points of discussion in the March 1987 meeting of the representatives, to be sure of equal interpretation of the approaches by all representatives. The next diagram shows the results of this research.

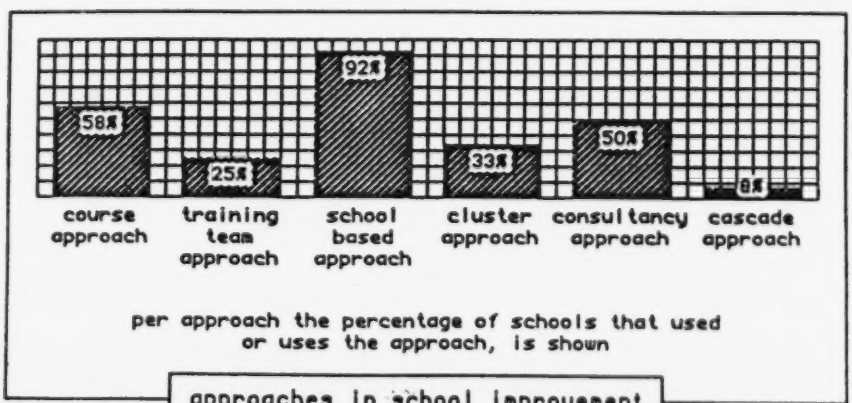



figure 14 approaches in school improvement in the contact schools

This diagram clearly shows that the school-based approach was the approach mostly favoured by the contact schools. Indeed it was, also to their own conviction, the key to their success. It is the approach in particular which brings about the commitment of the teachers. And without this commitment no school improvement would succeed. Isn't the effect of an improvement always a change in teacher's conduct?

If solely the school-based approach is applied, there will be the disadvantage of not making use of information and expertise which comes from outside the teaching staff. In the contact schools this disadvantage was reduced by employing other approaches next to the school-based approach. Particularly by utilising the course approach and the consultancy approach - both notably present in the diagram - the relevant expertise from outside the school was taken care of.

From conversations with representatives of the contact schools it became evident that making use of the consultancy was rather difficult for a number of schools simply because they could hardly find a consultant. Nevertheless, because of recent developments in four schools it looks as if the consultancy approach will, within a foreseeable future, score as high as the school-based approach.

It is striking that in these school improvement projects the school-based approach should score so high, apart from whether the improvement was initiated by national or local authorities, or within the school itself. In discussions among representatives of contact schools, however, this was just taken for granted, even before the results of the research were made known.

Because the representatives of the contact schools were also asked to indicate for which improvement (in terms of the fourteen characteristics) each approach was applied, it is possible to trace differences in the use of the approaches, too, for each zone.

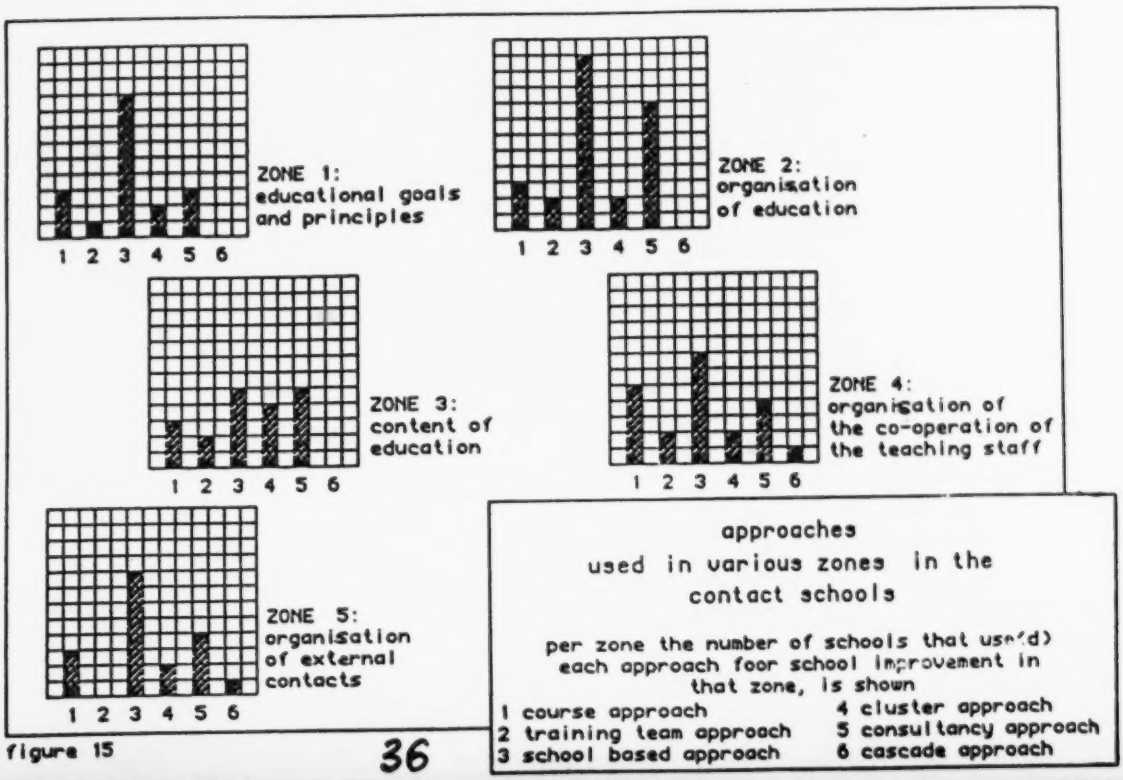

ZONE 1: educational goals and principles
1 2 3 4 5 6
ZONE 2: organisation of education
1 2 3 4 5 6
ZONE 3: content of education
1 2 3 4 5 6
ZONE 4: organisation of the co-operation of the teaching staff
1 2 3 4 5 6
ZONE 5: organisation of external contacts
1 2 3 4 5 6
approaches used in various zones in the contact schools
per zone the number of schools that use(d) each approach foor school improvement in that zone, is shown
1 course approach
2 training team approach
3 school based approach
4 cluster approach
5 consultancy approach
6 cascade approach

figure 15

In broad outline we recognise the same pattern as in the overall survey, shown in the previous diagram (fig. 14).

Yet a few points stick out:

- The school-based approach is the least evident in the school improvement zone, number 3. It seems as if co-operation with others and expertise from outside are as important for improving the content of teaching as working at it internally, within the school itself. This is not so surprising considering that for curriculum development specific knowledge and expertise are indeed required.

- The use for the consultancy approach stands out in zone 2. One would say that within this zone the need for external expertise is greater than in other zones. It would be interesting to find out what the specific needs would be, as there is no information about this yet.

- The course approach is relatively much utilised in zone 4. Apparently the course approach gives special advantage to improving co-operation among teachers. It was possible to gather some evidence on this during the March 1987 meeting of contact schools. What actually took place seemed to be directed towards improving communication and co-operation skills in teachers as well as in head teachers. Some management courses, too, seem to have had some influence.

## 12. The End of the Search (?)

I started my search with the intention of looking for common features in the "school improvement from within" in the 12 contact schools. Thereby I also tried to find answers to some questions.

> "Would it be possible to identify specific zones of attention in 'school improvement from within' to which every school should apply itself in order to develop evenly?
> And would these zones be perceptible in the work of the contact schools?"

To answer this question I used my framework of five zones in school improvement, described in chapter 4. This framework proved to be applicable to the "school improvement from within" of the contact schools:

- in each zone of the model common features of school improvement could be found by qualitative analysis of the contact schools' progress reports

- the further research made clear that in the reality of the contact schools much attention is paid to all zones, eg see figure 13 in chapter 10.

Among the 14 common features in school improvement that were found in the contact schools, the characteristics of zone 4 are very important ones, for it is this zone 4, the organisation of the co-operation of the

teaching staff, which is the central one for school improvement from within: this is where the "heart" of school improvement beats, what keeps it alive and going. The three common factors in zone 4 that were found in the contact schools could be added to the framework. This will improve the model because it makes visible what is necessary to make the "heart" of school improvement function.

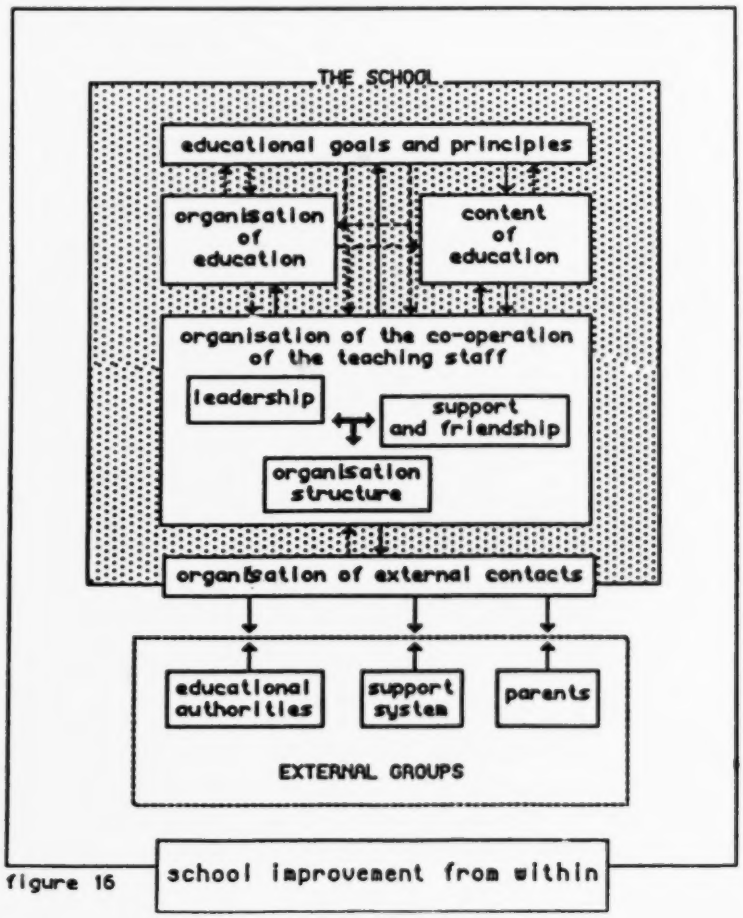



figure 16

Closely connected with this is another question that was stated in chapter 3.

> "How do the contact schools tackle the problems which they are faced with in school improvement? Do they try and solve these problems themselves, with the present teaching staff only? Or does one make use of other means as well?"

The meaning of this question was to check the statement whether these 12 contact schools were really busy with "school improvement from within". Apart from the question as to where the original initiative for the project was taken, or how much external influence came to bear upon the progress of change in the school, the teachers, whether as a team or as an influential group, regard themselves as those who do it, who carry out the changes, who make the necessary decisions and who, where they find it appropriate, appeal for external assistance.

The data presented in chapter 11 (eg figure 14) give one answer to this question. They clearly show that the "school-based approach" is the approach mostly favoured by the contact schools. If only the "school-based approach" is applied, there will be the disadvantage of not making use of innovation and expertise which comes from outside the teaching staff. In the contact schools this disadvantage was reduced by employing other approaches next to the school-based approach. The relevant expertise from outside the school was taken care of, particularly by utilising the "course approach" and the "consultancy approach".

Another answer to the same question comes from the data presented in chapter 10. Fourteen topics we recognised: concrete improvements in the contact schools. Organisation structure, one of these topics, was present in all 12 schools. This means that in all schools the structuring and functioning of the co-operation of the teaching staff itself was a subject of improvement: more effective an efficient collaboration to enhance the ability of the staff to manage the school improvement. In chapter 3 I formulated three questions. One remains:

> "Are there subjects, themes or trends to be found which are sufficiently common features in the contact schools and which could be reckoned as (common) goals to strive for in school improvement?"

Well, I found the 14 characteristics of school improvement by analysing the progress reports; and their presence in the reality of the contact schools was confirmed by the research as I reported in chapter 10. In the discussion with the representatives of the contact schools these 14 features became more and more goals-to-strive-for; direction pointers instead of just objective common features. The framework of the five zones connected with these 14 characteristics became an instrument in thinking and talking about school improvement.

Which brings me back to Winnie-the-Pooh's problem I mentioned in the introduction. Many teachers experience the inaptitude to put into words thoughts about important things in school improvement when they meet to talk about their profession, education. A school, busy with school improvement, develops its own "language of school improvement", words, notions, concepts that become familiar in the communication at school. It is even one of the important functions of an educational consultant to awaken in the teachers those concepts - and to provide words for them - which they can relate to their own daily practice, whereby a "language of teaching" evolves which helps them to become conscious of what they regard as most important in their work.

It also enables them to communicate about it among each other. And it is only on the basis of this communication that they can come to propert decision-making about the organisation of school education and its improvement.

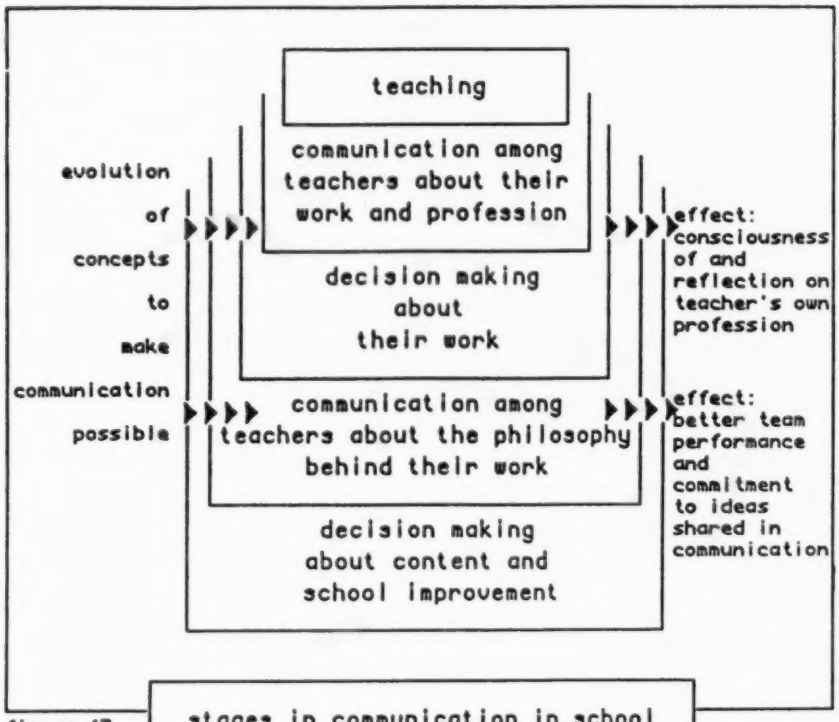

teaching
communication among teachers about their work and profession
decision making about their work
communication among teachers about the philosophy behind their work
decision making about content and school improvement
evolution of concepts to make communication possible
effect: consciousness of and reflection on teacher's own profession
effect: better team performance and commitment to ideas shared in communication
stages in communication in school

figure 17

In my school improvement work in the Netherlands I use a model of four stages that can be observed in the communication among teachers involved in school improvement. In two stages, 1 and 3, it is important that teachers at a school start to use common concepts which enable them to communicate more effectively. I am convinced that the 14 characteristics of the contact schools provide concepts that could be used fruitfully in stage: communication among teachers about the philosophy behind their work. The 14 characteristics provide a framework of goals-to-strive-for in primary education. Action and research are necessary to verify or refute this opinion.

"The end of the search" is the title of this chapter. And a question mark (?) is added to it. Of course! I was conducting a first and thorough exploration of a terrain in which so very much more is possible and, indeed, needed. Actually, while I performed my work on the Contact School Plan, I was already moving in the chosen direction:

- I used the five zones to make a division to bring structure in the work plan, a broad curriculum, which every Dutch school is required to compose and produce every two years. Together with some colleagues of the Regional Pedagogic Centre Zeeland, I produced supporting materials and a workshop (outline) of which many Dutch teachers have made use in composing the plan of work for their schools. The results of this activity have been published elsewhere(8).

- I used the five zones and some of the fourteen characteristics to design (together with my colleagues of the R.P.C.Z.) a model and a method with the help of which teachers can work out a multiple year plan of school improvement by communicating more purposefully about the philosophy underlying their work. A publication describing this effort is being prepared.

It is important, also within the Council of Europe, to sustain (and extend) what has been achieved by Project no. 8, which encompasses much more than merely the Contact School Plan. Within Project no. 8 there now exists a network of mutually well-adjusted contact schools with a knowledgeable managing group and with clear-cut relations to some members of the project group. It would seem a waste of time, money and energy if the present expertise and the fruitfully functioning co-operation were not to be exploited further in some form or another.

EPILOGUE

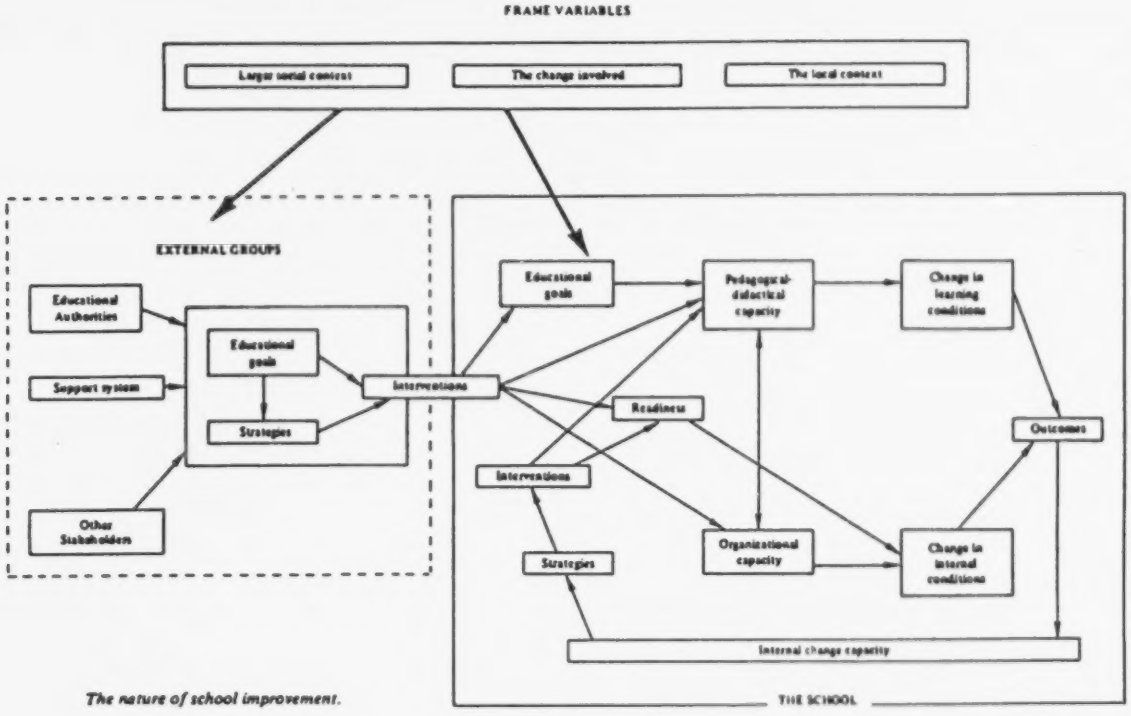
I became a teacher because, somehow, it seemed an interesting occupation. While working I became an enthusiastic teacher and, later, an enthusiastic head teacher, because I felt seized by the possibilities which this profession holds out to be of significance to growing children, not only as far as their learning is concerned, but also in the field of emotions and personal relationships. Later, as a consultant and even more, now, as a director of a consultancy service, I am driven by the same goal: to work for a better future or, rather, a better present for children.

In our work, which embodies so many complex, important and exciting things like school development, zones, characteristics and a language of school improvement, I think we would do well to halt from time to time and to ponder on the reality that all these complexities are supposed to have their effect on the ordinary, everyday life of a child and of a teacher.

> "When you wake up in the morning, Pooh", said Piglet at last, "What's the first thing you say to yourself?"
> "What's for breakfast?", said Pooh,
> "What do you say, Piglet?"
> "I say, I wonder what's going to happen exciting today?" said Piglet.
> Pooh nodded thoughtfully.
> "It's the same thing", he said.
>
> (A.A. Milne: "Winnie-the-Pooh")

Notes

1. This model "the nature of school improvement" can be found in W.G. van Velzen, M.B. Miles, M. Ekholm, U. Hameyer and D. Robin: "Making school improvement work", Leuven 1985.




*The nature of school improvement.*

It gives a broader picture than is given in my model of the five zones in school improvement: that model presents a view from within. It indicates fields (the five zones) of action for the teachers (and their helpers). Zones 2 and 3 "organisation of education" and "content of education" correspond with respectively "change in learning conditions" and "pedagogical-didactical capacity" mentioned by Miles and Ekholm.

Their "organisational capacity" and "internal change capacity" together correspond with zones 4 and 5: "organisation of the co-operation of the teaching staff" and "external contacts". Miles and Ekholm's "change in internal conditions" takes place in zones 2 and 4: "organisation of education" and "organisation of the co-operation of the teaching staff".

2. The form used to analyse the progress reports can be found in Appendix 1.

3. This concept "interactive learning" is described in:

   M. Thurler: "Our knowledge of child development", Strasbourg 1986
   M. Thurler: "Educational research workshop on development at primary school, Madrid 1985, general report", Strasbourg 1985
   G.H. van den Hoven and D. Kopmels: "The main curriculum-related conclusions of Project no. 8's workshops and seminars", Strasbourg 1987

4. The division in "diffused time, individual time, optimum time" stems from Th. Gordon: "Teacher effectiveness training", New York 1974

5. The request for data can be found in Appendix 2

6. The six styles of innovation are described in M. Galton: "Innovation", Strasbourg 1986 (Chapter 3 of the Final Report of Project Group no. 8 - DECS/EGT (87) 23)

7. The request for data can be found in Appendix 2

8. D. Kopmels and B.J. de Reu: "De grote lijnen in beeld: het Zeeuws schoolwerkplan", Amsterdam 1986

# A P P E N D I X 1

**Analysis Documentation Form Progress Reports**

1. Contact School: .....

2. Progress Report Nr.: ..... Date: .....

Author(s): .....

3. Subject of school improvement:

| subject | mentioned as being important | already accomplished | in the process of being realjsed | in preparation | zone |
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# APPENDIX 2

## REQUEST FOR DATA JANUARY 1987

8 January 1987
142.87-6.110-K/Q

To the members of the Working
Group on the Contact School Plan

Dear Friends,

Here it is: the second draft of the Annex on the Contact School Plan for the Final Report. In the "Introduction" you will find a brief description of the parts that differ from the first draft.

To prepare for our March meeting in Strasbourg and to complete the Annex, I need your help:

First of all the diagram on page 33:

1. When you have finished reading pages 10 to 31 you will have a clear view on the meaning of the 14 characteristics mention at the top of the diagram. And mentally you will have related them to your own school.

2. Please indicate which characteristics are important in your school. Put a • to a characteristic of your school that is the result of innovation that has already taken place. Put a o to a characteristic that is in innovation now.

3. For the innovation of some of the fourteen characteristics you will have undertaken specific activities with (some of) your teachers (courses, team meetings, workshops ...). If you look at the •'s and o's you have already put in the diagram, you will be able to indicate which of your important characteristics are the result of such specific activities. Please mark these characteristics with a —.

4. In the part of the diagram you completed for your school you can now have five kinds of spaces:

   ☐ this characteristic is not important for our school

   ☐ (•) this characteristic is important, it is the result of innovation that is already finished; no particular innovation programme was used

   ☐ (•/—) this characteristic is important for our school, it is the results of innovation that is already finished; we used a particular innovation programme

| | |
|---|---|
| o | this characteristic is important, we are working on it now; no particular innovation programme is used |
| o — | this characteristic is important, we are working on it now; we are using a specific innovation programme |

Secondly the diagram on page 34:

1. Six styles of innovation are mentioned at the top of the diagram. Maurice Galton describes them in his chapter of the final report: The first style of innovation we describe is the course development approach. Here teachers attend courses, held under the auspices of the local authority, where the aims and methods of the innovation are explained. These teachers then go back to their schools and act as "change agents". Their task is to persuade their colleagues to carry out the innovation. Each school is free to decide how they will carry out the programme within the resources provided. A number of research studies, however, show that this style of innovation seldom achieves the desired changes in classroom practice because the teacher, returning from the course, does not feel confident enough to take on the work of a trainer.

   A modification of this style is the training team approach which seeks to overcome this difficulty. Here a local authority selects a group of experienced expert teachers to help plan the in-service programme and then act as group leaders during the course.

   Subsequently, these teachers travel round the schools which are taking part in the innovation supporting the attempts of teachers to implement the changes in their own classrooms by diagnosing difficulties and giving additional training where necessary. This style of innovation has been used to introduce a programme designed to increase the use of micro-computers within the primary classroom in the City of Leeds.

   At the extreme is the school-based approach where a single school implements changes in response to problems which the staff, as a whole, have identified. Such programmes are often a response to a specific need in the local community as it the Italian study where a school attempted to improve the levels of literacy through the use of television.

   In this style of innovation the solution to a problem usually arises as a result of a consensus among the staff. Where agreement is arrived at in this way the level of commitment to the innovation by the staff is likely to be high but the process is a very slow one and is not very suitable for large-scale innovations. Some head teachers also find it difficult to cope with the democratic structure without support.

   A number of countries have adopted this model and instituted a cluster approach style of innovation whereby a cluster (or a group) of schools identify a similar problem and then work together to solve it. Schools continue to adapt the innovation programme to

meet their particular needs, but also come together from time to time to share experiences and to support each other whenever difficulties arise. This style of innovation has considerable advantages. The schools can share resources and it is also possible for teachers with particular experience or expertise to be shared out amongst the group of schools. This style of innovation has been tried in France where a group of schools have attempted to solve the problem of pupils who "drop out" of the system.

The fifth style of innovation which has been identified from the case studies uses a consultancy approach. Here, unlike the training team approach the consultant is not associated with a particular in-service programme with its own set of objectives and procedures. Schools attempt to identify their own problems and the consultant's role is to help each school clarify issues, arrive at solutions and then evaluate these.

The consultant usually has knowledge of evaluation procedures and perhaps some training in social psychology which allows him to help teachers cope with the stresses that can arise within a school when some staff resist the proposed changes.

Notable by its absence was a style of innovation called the cascade approach where training is focused on key staff who become responsible for the training of others who then in turn train more staff. This style may be used regionally or locally or within an institution itself. In the United Kingdom, for example, it is one of the main ways in which local authorities are attempting to overcome weaknesses of school-based approaches which, while increasing the commitment of staff, requires considerable resources. Such innovations are very slow to spread beyond the individual school because the teachers involved generally feel that the solution to their particular problem is not capable of being adapted to other institutions. The cascade approach provides groups of consultants who can act as links between different schools and identify common features within the innovation.

2. Please complete your part of the diagram by putting numbers in it:

   [4] under "course approach" means that at your school the course approach was used to improve the child-teacher relation.
   Notice that you can put numbers in one space.

That's all folks! That's all the help I need to complete the diagrams. Along with this letter you will find a page you can send back to me. I will combine the data you send me and write some comments on it. You will receive these before the Strasbourg meeting. To make this possible, please send your data to me as quick as possible. I hope to receive them all before the 1st of February. Can you do that?

I'm looking forward to receiving your answers. But most of all, I'm looking forward to meeting you in Strasbourg.

Yours sincerely,

Dook Kopmels

IMPORTANCE OF THE CHARACTERISTICS IN THE CONTACT SCHOOLS

| 1 innovation at several levels | 2 active individualisation | 3 autonomy and cooperation | 4 relation child-teacher | 5 watching progress and development | 6 arrangement of time and didactic workingmethods | 7 mixed-age groups | 8 varied range of subjects offered | 9 activities stimulating broad development | 10 organisational structure | 11 support and friendship | 12 leadership | 13 contact school-parents | 14 professional help |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

STYLES OF INNOVATION USED IN THE CONTACT SCHOOLS

| course approach | training team approach | school based approach | cluster approach | consultancy approach | cascade approach |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |

school:

# APPENDIX 3

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTACT SCHOOLS
(written by the representatives of the schools)

### Austria: Volksschule 15, Vienna

Austria's contribution to Project 8 is a new type of elementary school, called "Ganztagsschule". The name indicates the main difference to regular Austrian elementary school:

- The extended hours of daily attendance
- The GTVS-type provides integration of prep-lessons and recreational time periods within the 8-hour school day
- For this system to work, ie: to be able to cover the teaching curriculum and prep-lessons, as well as the recreational courses of one class, each class is staffed with two teachers. (The maximum number of pupils per class is 30 - it is easily reached - the demands are high!).
- At our school, we call the two classroom teachers «pilot» and «co-pilot»:
- The «pilot» teaches mainly the subjects, plus half the class (= 15 students) at prep-lessons.
- The «co-pilot» is specialised to teach recreational courses and also teaches half the class (= 15 students) at prep-lessons and attends «his» class during lunch.
- All recreational courses are only being taught with half classes (= 15 students).
- Therefore, «co-pilots» are not limited to teach in only one (their) class, but have overlapping schedules.
- This school type offers also the possibility for parents in need, to drop their children off at school as early as 7.15 am and collect them as late as 6.30 pm, because before and after school there are special courses under the guardianship of teachers.
- The curriculum itself doesn't differ from regular Austrian grade schools
- The GTVS concerns the first 4 grades of elementary school age 6-10
- The GTVS experiment was started in 1974 and has become institutionalised since then. There are now 13 such schools in Vienna, all of which operate successfully according to the model description of the GTVS
- Within our school, two teachers have adopted the so-called "Parallel teaching system", the aims of which are in short:

  - to divide all classwork, recreational courses, prep-lessons, lunch-hours etc between two teachers only,
  - to ensure the equivalence of both teachers in the pupil's eye and so eliminate any danger of estimating form masters differently to teachers of recreational classes,
  - to open new and more effective ways of classwork through complete co-operation and partnership of two teaching-
  - to give children the opportunity to relate to two equal teaching partners similar to the situation in a family.

  For teaching in the "Parallel teaching system", verbal grading throughout the first two grades is obligatory.

The GTVS 15-Reichsapfelg. 30 is located directly in Vienna in the 15th district. The immediate neighbourhood consists mostly of older tenement buildings which are slowly being replaced by new ones. All our pupils live in this area. Every child living in the district is eligible to attend our school. Preference is given to those children whose parents are both working, or who live with only one parent.

At present our school has 8 classes (two of each level), one pre-school class, 222 pupils, 25 teachers and 1 headmaster.

Cyprus: Kornesios Primary School, Nicosia

Kornesios is one of the 50 primary schools functioning in Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus. It numbers a population of about 250 pupils, 5 1/2 years old of different socio-economic background and capabilities and a teaching staff of ten people.

The school is attached to the College of Education on the island and future primary school teachers visit the school regularly to observe classes as part of their training.

The school project focuses on the necessity of the pupils' active participation in the integration of subjects and the organisation of the school community.

The pupils participate actively:

a. in the integration of subjects by suggesting means and activities for attaining the objectives and evaluating the result of their work,

b. in the school's administration by elections, through democratic procedures, of their class committees and the central council of the school and the vertical organisation of the school community in groups of interests.

Through the implementation of the project:

- the pupils' behaviour is improving in all areas of learning (cognitive, affective and psychomotor);
- the pupils' self-image, sociability and sense of co-operation, responsibility and initiative are enriched and strengthened;
- co-operation among pupils and between pupils and teachers is reinforced;
- pupils become more able in suggesting solutions and materialising decisions on various environmental problems;
- the school population is better prepared for their new role in a democratic and well-functioning society
  - co-operation, effectiveness and productivity of the school's personnel is increasing and the school's organisational climate becomes healthier;
- an open communication system is gradually introduced between all those involved;
- the parents' interest in school matters becomes more active.

Denmark: Bankagerskolen, Horsens

The municipality of Horsens has just under 55,000 inhabitants. There are 14 schools in the municipality.

The Bankagerskolen is a four form entry school and is situated in a rather new residential area in the southern part of the municipality. It has 1,030 pupils - pre-school class to the 10th form - and 75 teachers. For each new 1st class a group of teachers are attached to the year group. They have all their teaching hours with these pupils.

The school is divided into five "home areas" arranged as open plan, each of which has two year groups and about 200 pupils.

Furthermore, there are a practical subject area, an area with sports facilities, a resource centre and natural sciences area as well as an administration area.

Participants in the project:

The entire 3rd class year group in the school year 1983-84 (which will continue as the 4th class in 1984-85), ie five classes with a total of 115 pupils and six teachers, of which one teacher has his teaching hours distributed among all five classes and five teachers have one class each in almost all of the lessons of the class.

This has also continued in the 5th and 6th classes in 1985-86 and 1986-87. We are now eight teachers.

The theme of our innovation project is to develop a new and wider idea of school work, by means of a pedagogy which is based upon the children's needs, experiences, curiosity, interests and present and future situations in society - and not upon the various subjects (we are inspired by Freinet).

Because of the children's situation in today's society, we hope to produce effects on them, for instance concerning self-organisation, making their own choices, so that they can get personal and social self-confidence and at the same time work with something which is meaningful and which can be used by others. The work is mostly workshop-orientated. As examples we can mention: mathematics, theme work, free composition, drama and free forms of expression, correspondence, reading, printing, cooking, painting, pottery, textile design and woodwork.

The effects on the teachers must be to develop another teacher role. The teacher's work must consist of finding an answer to how he can contribute to develop the abilities and identity of the individual child, both as an individual and as member of the society. And of course we also hope it will have some effects on our parents. We hope that they see the necessity of changes in the school. And that they will try to understand their child and his/her situation.

Federal Republic of Germany: A. Schweitzer-Schule I, Freiburg

The Albert Schweitzer School is a school for 6-10-year-old children. At the moment there are 11 classes (230 children) and they are taught by 16 teachers of whom six are full-time teachers. Freiburg-Landwasser is a new satellite town and part of the town of Freiburg (180,000 inhabitants).

Landwasser itself has 9,000 inhabitants who work either in the town or in the neighbourhood. The aim of the innovation at this school is to teach French, the first foreign language, to the pupils of classes 3 and 4 (9 and 10-year olds). The aim of this education lies undoubtedly in the field of learning to know the French neighbours, their art, their mentality, their culture. In meetings across the border, language as a means of making oneself understood must be experienced as necessary. To reach this aim, a "play" approach must be used so that the pupils are capable of this. The French lessons - integrated in the morning hours - are presented as a supplementary programme (3 hours) to the normal education. Because the border with France is nearby, all the pupils (not only the most intelligent group) must gain experience that a language is not just something that has to be learnt but it is only a means in which to express oneself and to bring about contact.

Moreover, the three additional hours after an enlargement of pedagogic freedom to teachers and pupils in which playing, singing, dancing and painting are done without educational orientated aims. This makes integration in the school community especially possible for the weaker pupils or children with speech difficulties like, for example, children of foreign employees or children of refugees. This voluntary language programme for children, teachers and parents is scientifically conducted by the College of Education Freiburg.

At present about 16,000 pupils in about 300 German primary schools are taking part in this border project.

Finland: Linnala School, Imatra

Linnala Comprehensive School is situated in the centre of the town of Imatra. There are people from all social strata living in the school district. The number of single parents in the district is large.

The pupils of the school are all 7-12 year-olds, making up the school grades 1-6. There is a total of 228 pupils and 12 teachers. Innovations carried out in the school are twofold:

1. Pre-implementation experimentation with the now generally recommended schools timetable introduced by the ministry

2. Development of co-operation between the school and pupils' homes.

The introduction of the recommended schools timetable by the ministry involves:

- the forming of teaching groups for pedagogical - not administrational - reasons
- use of teachers as effectively as possible to reach the general goals set for comprehensive school education in the new school legislation
- permanent and temporary co-operation between teachers in the actual teaching situation.

Co-operation between the school and pupils' homes has been developed:

- by introducing more direct contacts to the parents; inter alia by teachings visiting the home of each pupil,
- by introducing monthly teacher-parent meetings in certain school grades,
- by introducing a specifically designed Pupil's Reminder booklet used by the pupils as a general notebook and the teachers as a medium for notifying pupil's home,

- by launching a visual media project with the aim of teaching pupils a more critical approach to television and of helping pupils' homes and the school to check the detrimental effects of indiscriminate TV and video viewing.

Greece: 128th Primary School, Athens

The 128th Primary School is lo-ated in a culturally deprived urban area of Athens, with a high population density. It is a school for children from 5.5-6.5 to 11.5-12.5 years old (420 children, twelve full-time teachers).

It is overcrowded and it is characterised by a shortage of teaching materials and equipment. Two other primary schools share the same school building alternately mornings and afternoons. Seventy per cent of the parents are workers and civil servants. Ten per cent of the pupils belong to divorced families. There are many pupils with learning difficulties due to the culturally and socially deprived family and school environment.

The aims of the innovation in this school are mainly:

Firstly, to help pupils with mild to moderate learning difficulties to reach the educational level of their class and to re-establish their contact with the regular educational process. Secondly, to increase the understanding of teachers, parents and the educational authorities on the problems and peculiarities of such children and to make them aware of the necessity of additional teaching.

The innovation programme is implemented successfully by providing:

1. an additional well-qualified teacher
2. a resource classroom
3. individualised programmes with continuous evaluation procedures
4. advice and teacher training
5. communication and co-operation with and between teachers, parents and school authorities.

Of great importance for the innovation is the acceptance by teachers and parents, the existence of teaching materials and equipment, the provision for teacher training, advice and support from the central educational authorities.

The innovation created a great demand from parents and teachers. It was disseminated to fifty (50) other primary schools over the country during the second year of its implementation. The dissemination of the innovation has been limited due to the lack of teachers and to the economic constraints.

Italy: C. Laurenti, Civitavecchia

The primary school "Cesare Laurenti" is a school for children from 6 to 11 years old (400 children, 20 classes, 30 teachers) in Civitavecchia. Civitavecchia is a town by the sea, with a port (quite important) and an industrial area.

The school innovation concerns four classes, full-time (35 hours a week), seven hours a day, eight teachers; one class is attended by 5-year-old children.

The aim of the innovation in this school is to integrate two types of schools that are separated in Italy - the nursery school (3 to 5-year-old children) and the primary school (6 to 11-year-old children) into a new type of school.

Italian primary schools start in general in mid-September and close at the end of the second week of June. There are 215 days in one school year and most of the school's lessons are given six days a week. Children attend the lessons four hours a day. There is a maximum of 25 children in one form. Children with learning difficulties attend common forms (age-grouped) in which the maximum number of pupils is twenty.

In the Civitavecchia experimental school children have five school days a week. There is a 32.5 hours-weekly timetable (prolonged time school day) except Saturday: 8.30 to 15.00. The lunch time from 12.20 to 13.00 is included in the school timetable.

Another aim of the innovation is the fulfilment of the new programmes with new subjects: statistics, probability, computer studies, education of sounds and music.

In the school, activities of children are organised in:

- individual games
- games with small groups
- collective games
- individual tasks
- group tasks
- collective tasks.

The teachers are deeply involved in the innovation. Teamwork exists outside the classroom as well as inside it. Team members teach partly together, partly on a rota basis.

They do not specialise completely, but they do have a main responsibility for teaching particular fields or skills. The teachers of the school innovation plan every week and study new methods with the headmaster.

Netherlands: H.K. van Duyvenvoorde Basisschool, Oost-Souburg

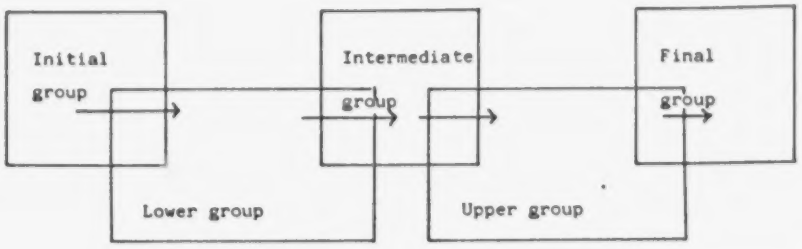
The H.K. van Duyvenvoorde Basisschool is a school for children from 4 to 12 years old (268 children, 12 full-time teaching jobs shared by 15 teachers) in Oost-Souburg in the south-west of The Netherlands.

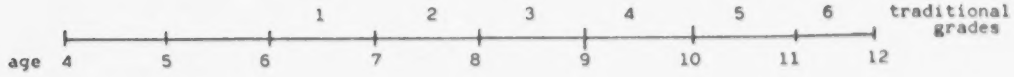
Oost-Souburg is a residential town which houses people who work at "De Sloe" industrial area. The aim of the innovation in this school is to integrate two types of schools that were formerly separated - the infant school (4 to 6-year-old children) and the junior school (6 to 12-year-old children) - into a new type of school.

This new type of school is now an "integrated school" in several ways:

- daily life and reality of the child are an integral part of the school activities
- not only the stimulation of the development of the child (eg by play) but also specific learning tasks are integrated in the curriculum
- in a lot of the activities, cognitive and social-emotional objectives form an integrated aspect of the same activity.

Instead of classes comprising of children of the same age, there are groups of children of different ages. There are five types of such groups:




Each type of group has its own learning environment and system, consisting of children of varying ages. Each pupil stays in the same group for about 2.6 years. There are three periods a year during which children may change groups. This means that every child will, at least three time during his elementary schooling, start in a group as a "little one" and gradually become one of the "bigger, more capable ones". Pupil-pupil, teacher-pupil, teacher-teacher, teacher-parent and teacher-outside expert relationships are based on equality between the two sides. Only the final group is more like a conventional class of pupils of the same age, the aim being to prepare pupils for secondary education. Of great importance for the innovation at the H.K. van Duyvenvoordeschool is the co-operation with the Regional Pedagogic Centre of Zeeland that provides advice and training on processes as well as on the content of the innovation.

This centre informed other Dutch schools very directly of all the results of the innovation at the H.K. van Duyvenvoordeschool.

Norway: Vardasen Primary School, Kristiansand

Vardasen Primary School is an open-plan school outside Kristiansand in the southern part of Norway. The social environment is good with great support from the parents. Head teacher, deputy head and 17 teachers are working in the school with 12 classes 1st-6th grade, 320 children aged 7-13. Vardasen is a "pilot school" which started in 1974 and organised a "Student Adapted Learning Environment". Today the same innovation is at work on a large scale, at national level, and has been given an official legitimised status in the revised national curriculum of 1985.

Characteristics in this innovation:

- student-adapted learning (abilities, capacity and interests)
- joint responsibility
- co-operative learning
- society-based learning
- an organisational openness in: timetable, grouping of students, teamteaching, integrated subjects, management procedures
- a physical openness: physical frames of instruction, school building, local environment and school, flexible learning materials.

"Student Adapted Learning Environment" may be further characterised by saying that it is a practical-minded innovation, emphasising both the individual student and the fellowship of students in school.

However, behind the reform we find a humanistic approach to learning, adapted to fundamental aims of learning in the compulsory school.

Sweden: Fajanskolan, Falkenberg

Fajans school is situated in a new housing estate in Falkenberg, which is on the west coast of Sweden.

The day-care centre (for children from 9 months to 13 years) and the elementary school are housed under one roof and it is possible for a family with several children to have them all on the same premises.

The school is divided into 3 colour units. Each unit contains children from 9 months up to 13 years. This is achieved by vertically integrating the nursery, junior and intermediate children.

Each colour unit consists not only of teaching staff but also some cleaning and kitchen personnel. Thus the children in the respective units meet the same group of adults throughout their stay at Fajans and this creates a feeling of security which is essential if teaching is to result in learning.

The school's motto is: "All children are everyone's children". The nursery school's creative working methods have influenced the elementary school, while their work with language development and practical application of mathematics has influenced the nursery section, and this provides greater continuity for the children. Methods adapt, as much as possible, to the children's needs and abilities.

Another important object of Fajans school is to create active pupils who can and will take responsibility for themselves, both now and when they, as adults in the 21st century, assume responsibility for that society.

That is why the children are trained from the very start to plan and be responsible for their own work. During their final three years at Fajans the pupils are capable of planning and carrying out a whole week's work in most subjects.

The development work at Fajans school affects everyone: children, staff and parents.

Switzerland: Guthirt Primary School, Zug

The Guthirt School is one of the eleven schools in the town of Zug. Zug is situated in the centre of Switzerland.

There are 12 classes: for each grade 1st to 6th, there are two classes. Besides there are two infant-school teachers and two classes for immigrant children.

What is more, there is a teacher for craft work and a specialist in speech-training working at the school. The school building is situated in the north of the town, in the centre of an industrial estate.

The aim of this project is to foster a more intensive and a further internal development of the teachers and their co-operation.

- The wish expressed for this project arose from practical experiences, consequently "from the basis and for the basis".

- The team of teachers is not particularly chosen, it concerns a coincidental structure.

- The "forum" is based on (supported by) voluntariness, the first and last motive must be one's own motivation.

In regular discussions, actual themes are dealt with in the school and in addition to which the teachers are involved as directly as possible.

Experts are involved here to give advice and to take part in discussions with the teachers.

These discussions contribute to better co-operation and make possible that joint decisions can be made.

It has appeared necessary to tune in the content of the successive themes to each other in order to be able to examine a particular problem more deeply.

United Kingdom: St Aidan's Primary School, London

St Aidan's Primary School in the London Borough of Haringey has many of the characteristics of an inner-city school. There are some 200 children with one head teacher, nine full-time teachers and one part-time

teacher. The children enter the nursery class at 3 years and transfer to the main school at 4 years and stay until the end of the academic year in which they reach 11 years. There is normally one class for each year group but increasing pressure of numbers at the younger end of the school may make it difficult to maintain this. They come from several different ethnic backgrounds.

A Parental Involvement in Reading scheme was started in 1979 as part of a complete revision of the school's literacy policy. The role of the teacher responsible for remedial work was changed to that of curriculum leadership for language and literacy with particular emphasis on the reading curriculum and resources. Before parents could be included in the reading process the book resources had to be improved and part of this improvement was the development of a parents' and children's fiction library and school bookshop.

The decision to introduce a Parental Involvement in Reading scheme was taken as a result of the publication of the research findings of a project carried out in six Haringey schools by the late Professor Jack Tizard of the Thomas Coram Resarch Unit, Institute of Education, University of London. This project is usually referred to as the Haringey Project.

The scheme, after staff discussion and planning sessions, was introduced gradually into the school starting with the 6-years-old class in the spring term of 1979. It was extended into the other classes during the academic years 1979-82. The children took home, regularly, reading materials, usually books, that they were working on in school to share with their parents at home. The scheme proved popular with both children and parents from the beginning and was also supported by the teaching staff who were quickly able to see rewarding results for all the extra work that the scheme involved them in.

The children's reading progress was monitored regularly both by the school and by the local education authority. The children in the third year were tested on the Neale reading test with 85% of them scoring below 100 (national average 50%) in 1978, the first intervention group, after one term, showing 35% below 100 and the following five years an average of 12% below 100.

The 7th year children tested by the local education authority with the London reading test showed 60% below 100 in 1979, 40% below after the first intervention (1 full year) and the past three years an average of 25% below 100.

Since September 1985 the literacy post holder has been working outside the school (her post in school being covered by a member of the local education authority's unattached team) to review the home-school reading links in other schools in Haringey and to devise support strategies for schools who wish to extend or start Parental Involvement in Reading schemes.

Thus it is planned that as the work continues to develop in St Aidan's School the experience of the children, the parents and the teachers there will be joined to that of other schools and shared with and spread to all the primary schools in the local education authority.

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